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# CAPTAIN WARDLAW'S KITBAGS



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HAROLD MAC GRATH



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1964

CAPTAIN WARDLAW'S  
KITBAGS



# Captain Wardlaw's Kitbags

BY  
HAROLD MacGRATH



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CAPTAIN WARDLAW'S  
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# Captain Wardlaw's Kitbags

## CHAPTER I

**I**N THE beginning—it was in the pre-war days—there was a street-fight at night on Broadway, before a famous restaurant, a fight in which nobody was seriously hurt and over the spectacular ending of which there was a cackle of laughter.

Some Yale students had come to town to celebrate an athletic victory. They had broken up into army groups, as the saying goes these days, and the most turbulent group had invaded Broadway. They set all that territory by the ears and missed jail a dozen times because they could run faster than the police. They finally gathered before the restaurant, doddering as to whether they should go on or in, when one of them discovered the basic ingredients of a riot. It was a private coupé waiting at the curb. The man on the box, in shining brass buttons and buff, stared ahead erect and detached, his whip at rest.

“Pipe the sea-goer and the captain on the bridge!”

“Let's navigate the old hooker up to the Park and back!”

"You've said something!"

The youngsters surged toward the coupé and stated their demands. The coachman wisely pretended not to hear. One of the students ran out and caught the horse by the bit. The coachman stood up.

"Stand off!" he warned.

"Down from the bridge!"

The coachman immediately began to lay about with his whip—which was an exceedingly unwise thing to do. His action made it imperative for the honor of Old Eli to drive that coupé to Central Park.

If there was a policeman near by, he decided that one of the finest was not equal to twenty-odd of the wildest.

The coachman was finally pulled from the box. Suddenly the vortex became a series of eddies, as if a strong current had burst into it from an unexpected source. At the far side a silk hat appeared, and it moved determinedly toward the curb and the unhappy coachman. The bystanders—typical New Yorkers who never meddle with events which do not concern them intimately—saw the students stagger about like tenpins before they understood that a rescue was going toward. Presently some of the bystanders caught a glimpse of the stranger's face, and one of them recognized the tanned, handsome countenance with its crisp little military mustache. At least his neighbors heard him mutter a single word—"Wardlaw!"

"Just a moment, boys!"

"Break away, there!"



"On your way, Mr. Buttinski! We're going to have that hack!"

"All right. You can drive it to the Park if you want to. But do you really want to—now?"

The bystanders automatically pressed closer. Here was something really interesting. Several of the older men recognized an unusual fact in the drawling words. Yonder cool individual possessed an uncanny insight into the psychology of student minds. The boys could, having a large majority, take the coupé wherever they pleased; but why take it, now their power was thus frankly acknowledged?

"Well, here's the old hooker. Do you want to walk over me to it? Easy as falling off a log. You're twenty to one. But will it be worth while? Some of us are due to get mussed up. And think of all the lights you haven't seen yet. What's the good word?"

"Three cheers for Old Eli, and you win!"

"Three times three, if you like!"

"Bully for the plug hat!"

Some bystander laughed. The laugh was caught up and carried around the half-circle. Those students closest to the stranger eyed him speculatively. Any man who could charge through them the way this one had—without even losing his hat—was worthy of respect. Still, it wasn't the strong arm; it was the fearless attitude, the readiness to combat and the friendly counsel. A student laughed, another and another.

"All right, Mr. Buttinski; consider your—

self tapped for Bones. Come on, boys! We *could* have done it!"

Magically the jam broke into small groups; and the north stream and the south stream of Broadway resumed its flow.

The stranger helped the coachman to his box.

"Hurt?"

"Shaken up a bit, sir. Nothing serious. Thank you, sir."

"A word of advice. With a mob like that, always surrender at once. They didn't really want to drive your coupé; they only wanted to prove they could. Good night."

Now, this trivial incident set into motion an implacable hate and an insatiable curiosity, and was in due season to react upon the agricultural future of some four hundred million Chinese. All of which forces me to deduce that there is no such thing as a trivial incident, that one and all are deliberate moves toward preconceived ends, whether these ends be love or war or business.

## CHAPTER II

ON A certain brilliant autumn afternoon, a rickety station victoria drew up at the curb in front of Shepheard's Hotel in Cairo and deposited Captain John Wardlaw, late of the Engineers, but now the practical head of the Hong Kong branch of the Oriental Construction Company of New York.

Military and political titles have an odd way of sticking. Nearly twelve years had been filed away since Wardlaw resigned his commission; yet from Vladivostok to Manila, from Cairo to Yokohama, he was still addressed as "Captain" by those who knew him.

His luggage consisted of two kitbags—small leather trunks, if you wish, that one can carry on trains, in the racks, where they threaten to fall at every turn and crush the passengers below. They were tolerably battered and belabeled. The Captain took charge of one of the bags, despite the porter's protest, and staggered up the terrace steps, past the indifferently interested tea-drinkers.

Some British officers in polo-togs, however, stared curiously. For Wardlaw always gave the impression of being an officer in mufti. The swing of his stride, the straightforward-

ness of his approach, the tilt of his chin and the resolute gleam in his blue eyes were essentially military. A man cannot successfully imitate this military suggestion; nor, once having been trained to it, can he discard it at will. It becomes an integral part of his character; like hammered brass, it cannot be wholly smoothed out.

He glanced neither right nor left but made straight for the entrance, the clumsy kitbag banging against the calf of his leg. The many young women sent mildly speculative glances over their teacups. They would have been genuinely astonished had they discovered that from the curb to the door, Wardlaw's traverse had been one of terror and misery. In the cool, dim office he dropped the bag for a moment, removed his Panama and wiped his forehead. Well, he had run the gamut without stumbling or falling down. He was certainly getting on in the world.

"Room and bath, reserved for John Wardlaw."

"We have the room, Mr. Wardlaw."

The clerk passed out a key, which Wardlaw gave to the porter. At once the porter started for the stairs.

"Any mail?"

"A moment, please." The clerk went through a stack of letters. "Here is a cable for you, sir."

Wardlaw put the cable unopened into a pocket, picked up his bag and walked over to the elevator, which he entered.

A little yellow man, with the humorously

tilted eyes which are singularly humorless, got up from the lounge and sauntered over to the desk.

"Who was that gentleman who got into the lift?" he asked in flawless English.

"Captain John Wardlaw, Hong Kong. You are leaving to-morrow, Mr. Huroki?"

"Oh, yes."

Mr. Huroki then hurried way to the billiard room, where he interrupted a game between two of his compatriots. The three talked in low tones; and the two players appeared to agree with everything Mr. Huroki said. At length he walked away, and the two resumed their game.

Outside, another victoria had arrived. Steamer-trunks, bandboxes, small bags, and kitbags flowed from the curb to the entrance. The person to whom these belonged stepped down—as Aurora might have stepped down from one of her clouds—settled with the driver and walked leisurely to the terrace.

Twenty pairs of masculine eyes widened joyfully and hopefully, and forty pairs of feminine eyes narrowed, presumably because it was instinctive that they should. To any one woman the beauty of another is a menace.

Inasmuch as Captain Wardlaw was presently to become the shuttlecock in a rather amazing game of double battledore, it is not out of order to digress for a moment to point out certain characteristics of the man, since in their application hangs this tale. There are some men who cannot help it any more than

they can help breathing. It is strongly written in the corpuscle. Brave as lions, valiant as Palladins, they walk in fear of women. Bearded metaphysicians and bulgy-browed psychologists mull over the question, look wise and say nothing. What can they say? Quicksilver is visible, a substance, but you can't pick it up with your fingers, can you? It is an unapproachable subject that man born of woman should be afraid of women. There is nothing logical about it, no handhold for analysis; it is the antithesis of nature's plans. The unspeakable misery of a bashful man! And we are all of us cruel enough to make sport of this affliction. Soldiers, statesmen, sailors, explorers, ready to face inconceivable dangers and hardships, and equally ready to trail their coat-tails on the wind at the sight of a pretty woman!

And so it was with Wardlaw, who went hither and thither across the world, grossly libeled as a woman-hater, when in truth he hated only himself. He was an only child; and the god of malice, always at odds with the human race, never fails to pounce upon the only child; the result is that the only child invariably has some peculiar twist in its make-up. Wardlaw's was bashfulness.

In conjunction with this bashfulness—in-sult to injury, as it were—there was an almost childish romanticism. He was as full of romance as a Chinese water-chestnut is full of starch. He had the creative mind of a Dumas and was as inarticulate as the *Lone Fisherman* in "Evangeline." Once, in Simla, he

had become acquainted with an American astronomer who had just come down from the lesser Himalayas with his observations; and one afternoon at tiffin Wardlaw laid bare the truth.

"Ah!" mused the scientist. "The petty disturbance of collective thought. Subjugated easily enough. Will-power."

"I've got all the will-power in the world; but I can't talk to them."

"Force yourself to break the ice, and you won't find the water so cold."

"I tried that once, in pure desperation. The boat was leaving Colombo. I saw a pretty girl at the rail, screwed up my courage, boldly approached her and opened up on the weather." Wardlaw grinned as he recollected the episode. "She greeted me with a how-dare-you! And then her brother—nine foot high and seven broad—stepped up and asked if he should knock my block off. I never tried it again."

"Mere piffle!" declared the professor.

"You go to the deuce!"

"Once never proves anything; it's twice and thrice that lands you somewhere. You'd find that out if you'd try hard enough. You don't hate 'em?"

"Lord love you, no! Why, I've got a girl picked out in every port, like *Billee Taylor*, but I can't get any nearer than telescope range."

"Interesting case, but nevertheless piffing."

"I came to you for advice.

"I'm giving it," replied the professor

blandly. "You'll never get anywhere by wishing. Play the cave-man."

"And get my head knocked off by her brother? Thanks!"

"Pick out one that hasn't any brother," said the professor with a chuckle.

"I say, that's worth thinking over," Wardlaw admitted soberly.

He was thirty-seven years old, kitless and kinless. At that age a bashful man is rather hopeless. In his selected field he was a real genius, a master of men, tireless, inventive, courageous, a man who undertook Herculean jobs and completed them without talk, without fanfare. He was really the kind of hero young women dream about, millions and millions of them, hopefully at seventeen, somewhat doubtfully at twenty, and cynically at thirty.

A bashful man generally has some physical defect to begin with. He is hard of hearing; he is nearsighted; or he possesses a dull, unattractive countenance. He begins by imagining that his defects are glaring, that when people smile they are smiling at him. But Wardlaw's defect was purely mental, and was quite as inexplicable to himself as to his friends; for physically he was a handsome man.

His fear of women had walked beside him since boyhood. In all his years he had known the companionship of but one woman, his mother, who had died shortly after his appointment to West Point. He did not accept this blight pacifically. He fought it dog-



gedly, year in and year out, but always hopelessly. On the other side of the medal, he was not afraid of any man or beast that walked on two legs or four, or the biggest job that a man could tackle. But a woman!

Call it odd, but his success was more or less due to this bashfulness. The Oriental Construction Company, when it turned over plans and specifications to John Wardlaw, knew that only death itself could hinder him from completing the task. The man who held the destinies of the O. C. C. in his hands carried a private record of men whom the Far East had broken beyond repair because they had not been afraid of women.

After leaving West Point, Wardlaw had spent three grilling years in the Philippines. He was fond of military life, but he understood that it would take years and politics to reach any height worth while, and he wanted to get into the middle of things while he was young. In other words, his ambition reached out beyond what Uncle Sam could do for him.

One afternoon in Manila he was introduced to a guest of the club, a big man, with fine eyes and a mellow persuasive voice—Henry Ainslee, the head of one of the greatest engineering concerns in the world. The outcome of this chance meeting was Wardlaw's resignation from the Engineers and a start toward real fame and fortune. He built bridges, breakwaters, canals, oil-wells, reservoirs, and railroads. Thus, to date, he had toiled arduously for fifteen years in the Far East, where fibres loosen quickly and morals become ex-

pediencies; yet his flesh had not softened, nor his morals. Only three times had he returned to his native land in these fifteen years.

The head office in New York was rather a nebulous concern to him. Of the three men in control, he knew only Ainslee intimately. Clarke, the general manager, and his nephew Carrington, the supply man, he knew scarcely at all, a condition of affairs due to the immense distance between Hong Kong and New York, whether you faced east or west. If he knew Ainslee well, it was because Ainslee was an inveterate traveler and took keen pleasure in visiting the scenes of various enterprises under construction. Owning a fast sea-going yacht, it was nothing for Ainslee to coal up and set out upon a thirteen-thousand-mile voyage. Regularly, once a year, he turned up in Hong Kong.

Thus, Wardlaw's affections had instantly gone out to Ainslee. The millionaire drew him irresistibly. He sensed the big soul behind the amiability, the genuineness of the ideals that had made the O. C. C. an example for others to follow.

Ainslee had a way—rather embarrassing to delinquents—of popping in upon one unannounced. There was one occasion Wardlaw would always remember. He had been putting up oil-pumps in Burma, and who should step off the Irrawaddy packet but the old boy himself. For two weeks Ainslee hovered at Wardlaw's elbow, and it was only on the night of his departure by train to Rangoon that the young engineer recalled the amazing fact that

during all this time Ainslee had never offered advice.

"Son," said Ainslee suddenly, just as the train was about to move, "you've delivered the goods. When a man doesn't ask me for advice and I don't offer it, he doesn't need it. When this job is done, you will proceed to Hong Kong and take charge of that office. Shake 'em up. Find men who are congenial to you. Your salary will be ten thousand a year. And on the day you ask me for a raise I'll fire you. Good luck and good-by!"

Nothing more than that. Wardlaw remembered going back to his camp in a kind of amethystine haze. From a hundred to two hundred, with a mere wave of the hand like that! But from that day forth Wardlaw went about his world establishing engineering precedents. He finished jobs before time-limits, and he never had to go back to patch up hurried work. He took Ainslee's warning seriously, but each Christmas he would find a few shares on his desk. It was sheer happiness to work for a man like that.

He knew Clarke, the general manager, to be a hard driver. After several years of reading a man's correspondence, it is possible to reconstruct him mentally and physically. A gray bullet for a head, a thin mouth, an eagle's beak for a nose, a dynamo made up of human coils—that was Clarke as Wardlaw had drawn him visually; and his astonishment was profound when he saw that the real Clarke filled out the imaginative lines neatly. But he did not like Clarke; he only admired him.

It was the same with Craig Carrington, the nephew. Wardlaw admired him, but did not like him. There was too much calculation, too little spontaneity in his letters. But as a supply man he had no peer in America, young as he was. In constructing him by mail, however, Wardlaw had missed the target completely. Upon his first return to New York he had found an exceedingly handsome young man, suave and blasé, who preferred New York to adventure, money to ideals.

There was a certain guilelessness about Wardlaw. Because he was the soul of honor, he believed everybody else to be. As yet, he had never really fallen afoul a business intrigue, and so his illusions were still untarnished. That for six years, now, Carrington had been adroitly placing obstacles in his path, delaying materials, was undreamed of by Wardlaw. Like all shy, diffident men, he was incurious. The little ripples of office politics never touched him, or if they did, passed unnoticed. He went his way serenely, overcoming obstacles as they fell, taking it for granted that certain delays and obstructions were acts of God instead of man.

So much for the man—the shuttlecock of this tale. The woman, having arrived, let us spin the whirligig. Women! What should we do without them? And what is more to the point these days, what shall we men do *with* them?

### CHAPTER III

IF I have called the man the shuttlecock, I might with equal liberty call the woman the feather in the wind. Immediately upon entering her room, she undressed and took a bath. She even washed her head; and if you are a woman, you'll appreciate the risk she took; there being but two scant hours before dinner. She came forth rosy and resolute, dressed in a wonderful peacock kimono. From a small satchel she took out a contrivance resembling a comb which could be electrically heated. Thus, by six o'clock, her hair was perfectly dry. Women build up their hair and then get into their gowns, which is a procedure no man will ever fully comprehend.

Next she brought out four gowns and laid them on the bed. Then she walked up and down past them like a general reviewing his troops—which is not a bad simile, if you'll think it over. Bird of paradise, yellow-warbler, thrush and blackbird; she finally decided upon the blackbird, because, perhaps, her mood at this moment was inclined toward sombre things.

The decision made, she produced a small book, sat down before the little writing-table and began slowly to write, referring to the

book at the completion of each word. Ten minutes later she summoned a maid, giving her three sovereigns and the message she had written so laboriously.

"Send this cable at once and bring me the receipt. Such change as remains you may keep."

"Yes, madame."

Under the first light she came to, the maid attempted to read the message. But she did not succeed. It was a jumble of English words, each understandable in itself but collectively as illuminating as the hieroglyphics on the queen's tomb at Karnac.

Speaking of affinity of ideas: Wardlaw also took to the tub. He washed his hair, too, and dried it in two minutes. The ride up from Alexandria, always dusty, had been unusually so to-day. Gusty east winds had rioted all day across the desert bluffs. There was fine sand in his hair, in his ears and his mustache. After the bath he wrapped himself in a Chinese gown of silk brocade—the color of which signified that, good Chinaman that he was, he was worshipping the recent demise of his grandfather—and opened his cable. It was in code and from Ainslee, dated at Hong Kong. Eagerly he got out his code-book, drew a chair up to the table and commenced to decode the message, confident that all the fog of the past few weeks would be promptly dissipated.

Engineers of Wardlaw's calibre are more or less secret agents of big business. The golden text is: "Keep your own secret,

out what the other fellow is going to do, and beat him to it." In these colossal engineering enterprises international politics was always intermeddling and contravening; America, England, Germany, and Japan fought each other continually in the Far East, and none of them was particularly scrupulous as to methods when many millions were involved. Wardlaw had escaped actual contact with this phase because Ainslee always handled that side of the business, being the prince of diplomats and negotiators.

It took Wardlaw a quarter of an hour to decode the message; but the final sentence, complete in itself, refused to disintegrate. Wardlaw scrubbed his chin impatiently. But for the keen phrasing of the main message, the hidden message would have looked like a joke, rather a silly one, too. "How old was Cupid?" Was that straight English, and if so, what was Ainslee trying to say? He was about to give up the riddle, when he recalled the addendum to the office code, really a personal code between himself and Ainslee, rarely used by either. The banal inquiry became a sinister warning. "Beware the little yellow men." This warning, in conjunction with what he had already translated, was illuminating.

He applied a match to both cable and translation, crumpled the black ash into powder and blew it from the ash-try. Then, with his hands behind his back, he paced his room. He was not a man given to flares; he was exceedingly economical in his gestures; but

never had such rage burned in his heart as at this moment.

The infernal black crookedness of it! The name wiped off the records, the fleet's blue flag with its white diagonal stripe cleared off the seas, the O. C. C. a memory! To throw an honorable and profitable business on the rocks because a few men had ideas instead of an Idea! To freeze out Henry Ainslee and relegate him to the shelf, to merge the O. C. C. with the General Construction, which was controlled by a clique of callous stock-jobbers: so that was it! This was the fog he had been stumbling through blindly! And why had the old boy kept him in the dark until this moment?

He filled and lighted his pipe, and a trail of blue smoke eddied and swirled after him. Ainslee ill, and Clarke, Carrington and their followers snarling at his heels—the lowest kind of treachery! And the future of the O. C. C. depended solely upon John Wardlaw's ability to get to Hong Kong on a certain date. That was enough. John Wardlaw would get to Hong Kong.

“If this deal falls, we fall with it. I hate to lug you into a game like this. But I need you. It isn't the money; they never can get to me deeply enough there to hurt me. It's the Idea that grew out of that old theodolite back in my study. Old Dick Cameron and I carried that across the Chilean Andes thirty-three years ago. Old Dick is dead, and now they mark me for the shelf. I've been ill, son; and I have had to use my illness as a



cloak. I let Clarke have the idea that I was breaking down mentally. But the old dog has one bite left, as he shall find. The truth is, they are mighty near their goal. I've controlled the O. C. C. because, since Cameron died, I've had the power to vote the estate's holdings. They have secretly hammered the Middale Steel—Cameron's old pet—until the Cameron holdings in the O. C. C. have been bitten into dangerously. They need but a few hundred shares to swing the merger next March—only seven months away. And if we fail in China, even those loyal to me will go over to the enemy.

“When they recalled you to New York—you will recollect my cable to keep mum—you must have let something out of the bag. Perhaps I should have made my warning more explicit, but I was ill. I wanted to get to sea, where I could act unwatched. They pumped something out of you, anyhow. You are not used to business intrigue, and those two are. I've had a detective on their heels for weeks. Clarke's own stenographer is on my side, and it was through her I learned that Carrington had anonymously tipped the Japanese consulate at Naples; and the Japs have no love for you since you beat them out on the Hu-peh canals. They have marked China down for their own, and our one hope lies in the sullen bitterness of the Chinese Government. It's up to you to keep the old plate going. This scheme was originally yours, so I've no one to bank on but you. Get to me.”

The old plate! Wardlaw would never for-

get the single dinner he had had at Ainslee's, nine years ago. They had gone into the study for coffee and cigars, and the old boy had pointed to the wall above the bookshelves. "See that, son?"

It was a bit of bronze a foot long and three inches wide. In embossed letters ran these words: THE ORIENTAL CONSTRUCTION COMPANY OF NEW YORK.

"Young man, that's more than a piece of bronze; it's an Idea. In Africa, in South America, in India, in Siam, in China, in the South Seas, you'll find that plate embedded in cement. Behind it, in invisible letters, you'll see the word *Service*. I have seen cities grow up beside that plate; great ships have found safety and haven behind it. It has made history; it has opened up wildernesses to humanity. With me the money is nothing; the Idea is everything. Always keep that plate in your mind's eye."

Wardlaw went over the past month, his arrival in New York, his interview with Clarke and Carrington. He hadn't been with them ten minutes before he had stepped into their clever trap—indirectly, the old boy's fault. Had this cable arrived that day in Hong Kong, he would never have returned to New York, despite Clarke's peremptory orders; he would have had at his elbow a thousand legitimate excuses to remain where he was. Well, the damage was done. "Watch your kitbags. Beware the little yellow men." So be it!

He repacked the kitbag from which he had taken the code-book, but left out his service-

able revolver, which he laid on the stand between the two windows, covering it with a newspaper. Then he tiptoed to the door, opening it suddenly. The corridor was empty. Next he approached the door which led into the adjoining room. This was locked. He listened intently. Evidently the next room was unoccupied; otherwise he would have heard the occupants stirring about at this hour.

The kitbag he himself had carried up he placed by the side of the bed. He took one of the pillows off and hid it behind the bathtub. Under the first sheet he laid the kitbag sidewise, covering it with the second sheet and drawing up the counter-pane in such a fashion as to deceive any eye but that of an experienced chambermaid.

This work completed to his satisfaction, he began to dress for dinner. The old military habit still clung to him. When in civilized parts of the world, he was somewhat of a dandy in regard to his clothes. At length he picked up his pipe and pouch, set his Panama jauntily and started for the door. Once there, he turned and sent a glance about the room. He turned, set the remaining kitbag on the centre-table, dusted the lock with talc and went out, leaving the lights on; a light seen through a transom, always suggests that the room beyond is occupied. He left word at the office not to permit the maid to enter the room to turn the sheets. At half after seven he entered the dining room.

It was late October. The season in Cairo was just beginning. The dining room was

filled with beautiful women from all over the world. The dazzling shoulders and arms, the flash and sparkle of gems, the wonderful heads of hair, each with its individualistic touch, ranging from blue-black to spun amber—it was an entrancing picture to Wardlaw.

He followed the head waiter in and out among the tables, hearing a snatch of conversation here, a tinkle of laughter there, scenting violet and rose and orris-root, and sometimes accidentally touching a gleaming shoulder. He was given a single table by the wall, a situation which pleased him. From this point of vantage he could feast his eyes to his heart's content.

Women, he mused. What was the matter with him? What had been the matter with him all these lonely years? From whom had he inherited his infernal diffidence? The misery of those early days in Manila, when they dragged him out to dinners and dances, his brother officers, and left him high and dry with his back to the wall! Homely men, brutes, namby-pambies, pretty fellows, one and all of them possessed the courage to engage a woman in ordinary conversation, while he, John Wardlaw, could only sputter like cannel coal. Why? And yet, if this affinity-talk amounted to anything, there was a girl for him somewhere. But would he know her when he saw her? Would he wait for her to catch up, or would he take to his heels as he always did?

Little yellow men. It was sobering. He knew the Japanese more than ordinarily well.

Once they embarked against this project, they would stop at nothing. They had been everywhere in China. What a time he and his boys had had in getting out of Peking unnoticed, unfollowed! And yet they had been followed. That street-riot in Fen-chow hadn't been accidental. O'Holleran's theodolite had been smashed by someone who knew what it was. And then there was that Jap he had found in his room at Ah Fuch's teahouse in Kung-chang-Fu. All this, no doubt, on a basis that John Wardlaw was well worth watching! But he had fooled them. He had done the surveying from the Tsaidam Swamps toward the coast. From the real beginning until they finally landed in Shanghai, not a suspicious interruption of any kind. They had suffered a lot of physical discomforts, to be sure, and had had a narrow escape from typhoid, which the white man will ever find at his elbow in China; and they had had months of hunger. But they had done the job.

Because of the aggressive and suspicious attitude of the Japanese, they had been forced to go at this adventure from a new angle. Ordinarily you went to the Chinese Government—always kindly toward Americans—and got your concession, all your powers of authority, rights of way, and so forth; then you shouldered your theodolite. Thus they had put the cart before the horse, covertly. A secret expedition over two thousand miles of a China few white men knew anything about, on foot, in pole-chairs and bullock-carts, crawling along at a hundred odd miles the month,

across mountains, down valleys, over rivers, skirting deserts and marshes, sleeping in dog-tents, half frozen at night and always hungry—a colossal venture which must have stirred the shade of Hercules. And a whispered word would have knocked the whole thing higher than Wu's dragon kite. And he, O'Holleran, Chedsoye, and Jones—they had done the job!

A business intrigue! After an immortal adventure, sordidness! Treachery from the inside. Beyond supercaution, Wardlaw knew he possessed no talent for this quality of adventure. He built things; he didn't tear them down. For twenty-odd days he would be at sea, guarding against the unknown. The Japs were patient beyond a white man's understanding; they were not only inscrutable, but proud and fearless and merciless—and vain. They had marked China for themselves, and woe to the meddler!

Carrington! Wardlaw's jaws knotted combatively. So his dislike for Carrington had been based upon something worthily instinctive. And, irony of fate, he had, in a burst of pardonable enthusiasm, shown the ace in his sleeve to that cold, handsome, calculating intriguer. He had said: "Five years!" And Carrington, first-rate engineer that he was, despite his cold-bloodedness, had instantly grasped the truth of the stupendous task practically completed by four tireless, resolute, loyal men. And that he was going to use this knowledge for his own private ends was made clear in Ainslee's warning.

He was sorry and depressed, but he did not blame himself wholly. Ainslee should have been more explicit in his first cable; and even this lack of foresight was excusable, since the old boy was ill. Clarke had told him that, and had even dared to add that Ainslee's mind was giving away. It was one of those singular twists of fate, which no man may successfully avoid.

Why had they permitted him to come thus far unmolested? Half the journey done, and not an enemy in sight. Perhaps it was the old story; east of Suez strange things happened that were never solved. Victory lay in the bottom of that kitbag, and he would carry it into the Hong Kong office, on a certain date, in face of a hundred Mikados.

He ate his dinner leisurely. When the sirupy coffee was set before him, he lighted a cigar. Some day, after he retired from active service—and men of Wardlaw's stamp are always retiring and dying in harness—he would spend a winter in Cairo.

From now on his ruminations were fragmentary. Just as he was following some train of thought, a beautiful woman left the room, and he had perforce to watch her navigate through the linen-covered islands.

Absently he reached into the inner pocket of his coat for a bit of paper to draw on—the arch of some culvert, maybe, or that half-moon which would take in one of the richest jade-quarries in China—and discovered an old letter from New York. As he unfolded it to turn it face downward, a name caught

his eye. Always this name stirred his curiosity, though never to a point of actual investigation. Richard Cameron had been dead eleven years, and still his name and official standing headed all official paper. No doubt Ainslee's influence and domination accounted for this bit of sentimentality, for Wardlaw could assign it to nothing else. Odd, but he had never seen Cameron, who had died in Mexico.

Cameron the force and Ainslee the diplomat, the negotiator; Cameron the thunderbolt and Ainslee the interviewer of emperors and kings and potentates; and perhaps the threatening disaster was due to the fact that the old boy had broken his health in a vain endeavor to play both games after the death of his partner. And quietly Clarke, who was force, a dynamo turned by avarice instead of ideals, had slipped into Cameron's shoes.

Suddenly Wardlaw sat up stiffly in his chair, forgot the past, the future and the unknown dangers which threatened it. There was, at this precise moment, no room in his thoughts for anything but the amazing present.

She!



## CHAPTER IV

**V**ALIANTLY he had tried to smother the thought of her, and Ainslee's revelations had succeeded to a certain extent in the accomplishment of this desire. And yonder she came, winding in and out among the tables, alone, toward him! His heart began to beat thunderously, and his ears filled with the sound of it. Evidently the vacant table at the right was her objective.

She was dressed in black, a dull black, which gave to her beautiful face, arms and shoulders the brilliant luminous whiteness of summer clouds. Her hair, thick black coils, seemed to throw off faint prismatic colors as she passed under lights.

Wardlaw drew in a long breath, slowly. He had discovered that by so doing he could control his heart-beats, more or less, after the first idiotic jump.

She sat down calmly and surveyed the other diners.

In reaching for a match that he did not need, Wardlaw knocked over his glass of water. A waiter had to rush frantically forward, of course, whip off the drenched cloth, supply a fresh one and attract the attention of everybody. Wardlaw did not have the cour-

age to act upon his immediate desire, to rise and leave forthwith. These awkward blunders always had the faculty of temporarily paralyzing him. Yet not even the waiter, a passable judge of human beings, suspected that he was gazing upon a mild order of mental débâcle. Beyond a sudden acceleration of color, fairly well hidden under his tan, Wardlaw's face was bland enough.

Within three feet of him the woman who had been filling his thoughts unduly for days! First at the theatre in New York, then on the *Cretic* the day before they landed at Naples, again on the jetty in Constantinople—now at his very elbow! Who was she? What was she? Whither bound? Because of his weakness, was he ever to know?

His shoulders drooped slightly. Here was the sort—outwardly, anyhow—of woman he had always dreamed about, woven his inarticulate romances around. There were no doubt men who knew her intimately. Lucky dogs! Or there might be one man who had his seat at the table of the gods. She!

Setting his jaws, he turned and looked at her boldly, even truculently—to find to his horror that she was looking squarely at him! But even before he could avert his gaze, he saw that in this look of hers there was apparently neither interest nor curiosity. She might have looked at a table-leg like that. Infernal, idiotic heart! He dropped his napkin and rose.

Blissfully unconscious that more than one roving feminine glance followed him, Ward-

law strode off toward the exit. The lady in black stared at his flat shoulders. This time there was interest in her eyes, which were as gray as the sea on misty summer mornings, deep as wells, and like wells, reflective. You saw the sky there, the sailing clouds, the stars, but you saw not what lay below. She smiled. Da Vinci, who knew more about women's smiles than all the other painters put together, would have seized upon it illuminatingly; but his brush would have discovered a touch of pity in her eyes despite the faintly ironic twist to her lips.

"The great Wardlaw," she murmured. "Well, we shall see."

Wardlaw went on into the lounging room, confused by a riot of conflicting emotions. He was happy, miserable, elated, depressed, puzzled. She! He lighted another cigar, but it went out half a dozen times, a fact which would have marked perturbation in any user of the weed.

The unknown, who had practically if unwittingly driven him out of the dining room, took her time. She seemed more interested in her paper-covered Tauchnitz than in the animated scene which draws so many to Shepherds to dine. From time to time, however, her gray eyes roved over the top of her novel. Her fingers were ringless. She wore a single jewel, a polished emerald shoulder-buckle.

Never doubt it, the other women, many of them having noted her arrival at tea-time, were watching her, speculating upon her age

and her past. The men saw nothing but her extraordinary beauty. A beautiful young woman, however, dining alone in public, is sure to invite malice and suspicion. In Cairo she will be either of two things, a princess junketing incognita or an adventuress. Naturally the women wrote her down adventuress and warned their men folks. Cairo was too near that notorious Port Saïd.

In parenthesis: poor old Port Saïd, grossly maligned for thirty years—dead and dull as the Bitter Lakes west of it, boasting these days of a few dilapidated bars, hotels run down at the heel, and a barnlike moving picture theatre! But east of it—well, you shall see.

Late, Wardlaw saw the unknown enter and take the chair directly in front of the leader of the string orchestra. Believing himself unobserved, he watched her closely.

Immediately—for such is the irrepressible Latin—the orchestra leader began to play to her. He twisted, rolled his eyes, swayed his slender body, until Wardlaw wanted to rush over, seize the fiddle and break it over the fool's head. But even as this desire came to him, he saw the unknown—yawn! This disconcerted the violinist, who at once selected some one a trifle more receptive. Wardlaw chuckled. Evidently she was able to take care of herself.

A woman who could take care of herself! He had never cared for the clinging kind, not even in his high-flown romances. In his imagination he fell in love with a woman who

invariably rode, hunted, fished, dauntless under all conditions. Yonder beauty—pshaw, to-morrow she would pass out of his life forever. It was a habit they had, these charming creatures: they always departed just about the time he made up his mind to learn something about them.

Dark eyelashes are of inestimable value to the possessor. One can, as it were, see without being seen. A slight droop of the eyelid, and the eye becomes hidden, but little remains hidden from that eye. Having ceased to be amused at the antics of the violinist, the unknown lowered her lashes and peered through them. Her glance stopped when it reached Wardlaw's keen, intelligent face, with its salient jaws, its crisp brown military mustache turned up slightly at the ends. Something pleased her, for a smile, shadowy, like a cloud passing over a field of wheat, stirred her lips and was gone before Mr. Huroki was sure that it had existed at all. In passing, however, he noticed that the smile left behind an imprint of gravity and seriousness.

His second cigar finished, Wardlaw sighed and got up. He would have liked to watch her all the evening, but he recognized the folly of such a proceeding. He went outside into the moonshine. The world lay magically white under his gaze. He walked without any particular destination in view, and at length found himself leaning against the steel parapet of the great Nile bridge. The flowing river, varnished with blazing silver, shot underneath with a thousand pleasant little

sounds. At his left, moored along the embankment, were the reedlike masts of the feluccas, forming a swaying lattice across the brilliant disc of the moon. Egypt!

To know a woman like that, to have her at one's side down through the highway of the years! He laughed humanly. Had he ever seen a beautiful woman without wishing this very thing? On the other hand, it was logical that he should think strongly about this young woman who had crossed his path so peculiarly. He took out his pipe, but he did not fill it. He thrust it back into his pocket, jammed his hat securely on his head—and began to run. He vaulted sleeping beggars, circled snarling dogs, dodged pedestrians, broke through a camel-train, dashed up the Shepherd terrace and never lessened his gait until he was inside his room. He was a fine specimen of a man to handle big affairs! But nothing in his room had been disturbed.

It was half after eleven; he undressed and got into his pajamas, turned out the lights and sat down by one of the windows. He wasn't sleepy. He sat there, planning his future and building old dreams over again. He must have idled away more than an hour in this manner, silent and motionless, when suddenly he lowered his pipe and assumed a listening attitude. He had a pair of remarkably keen ears. What he heard was the rasp of a door-knob turning. Naturally he focused his gaze upon the door which opened out into the corridor or hall. And yet obliquely he saw a black space slowly widen in the wall at his

right—the door which gave into the adjoining room. He reached for his revolver.

“I wouldn't come any further,” he said quietly.

But the black space went on widening.

## CHAPTER V

IN THE very still period which followed his challenge, Wardlaw thought keenly and bitterly. Before sailing from Hong Kong, some invisible presence had warned him, but he had stubbornly declined to listen. Why? Never before had he ignored that secret impulse which had been his guidance so many times in the past. Why hadn't he let O'Holleran accompany him—that fighting blue-eyed red-head, who could think quicker in danger than any one he knew?

By and by the black space ceased to grow, and Wardlaw concluded that the door to the adjoining bedroom was wide open. He leaned forward, tense and expectant, his revolver ready. Having sat in the dark for more than an hour, he could distinguish one object from another more or less accurately. Strain his eyes as he might—using the oblique glance which is often better than the direct in the dark—he could see nothing beyond that black space. No gray patch appeared to suggest a human face. The door had simply opened to its full width—nothing more than that.

He was used to nerve racking moments, but not of this peculiar quality. He had often reckoned with ambushes in the old Mindanao days, but always he had known the character



of the danger. But to sit still and wait for something you knew nothing about, a danger which announced its presence in this ghostly manner!

Having strained his eyes without success, he switched to his ears, for it is a physiological fact that one cannot strain both at the same time. The room had that supreme breathless silence of a pyramid-top. Yet he was absolutely certain that some one else was in the room. For a decade or more he had lived in the open; and to all who are fond of Nature, she lends a sixth sense. Wardlaw could not have explained; he only knew that some one else was in the room. One man or two?

He happened to recollect that he was in half-silhouette against the window, a square of pale reflected moonshine. But before he could leverage himself to his feet, a pair of sinewy arms seized his elbows, and he was jerked violently back. Something wet and sickly smelling was clapped over his nose.

When Wardlaw's senses returned—as a swimmer comes up from a deep dive, dazed and breathless—he was sitting in his chair. The room was dark. But for the evil taste on his tongue and the enervation, it might have been an unpleasant dream. He flung off the lassitude, the craving to sit still and do nothing, and staggered to his feet. There was no black space in the wall now; the door had been closed. He crossed the room to the light-switch and turned the key. He blinked for a moment, then looked at the bed. Untouched. All his confidence in himself returned. They

had overlooked that kitbag; but the one he had placed on the centre-table was gone.

He went into the bathroom, filled the bowl and soused his head and face, vigorously towelling himself. He then put on his trousers and coat over his pajamas and went downstairs. It was after two o'clock, and it took ten minutes to rout out some one in authority.

"Who occupies the room next to mine?" he demanded.

"What is your number?"

Wardlaw gave it. "I've heard strange sounds there."

"That is hardly possible, sir. The room is empty, being held in reservation for the Princess Zenia."

"Empty?"

"Yes, sir. Perhaps you were dreaming a little."

Wardlaw thought for a moment. "That would be a good joke on me. I wonder, now!"

"Too much Turkish coffee, if you are not used to it, will do that, sir."

"Never thought of that. Sorry to trouble you."

Wardlaw returned to his room. On the centre-table stood the missing bag. He ran to it. Locked! He took out his keys and unlocked it. The contents had been man-handled, but everything was there, even the code-book.

"The infernal beggars!" he murmured. "Keys for the next room and keys for my bags! And how'd they guess I'd go downstairs?"

These questions were followed by a thought

which wrinkled his forehead. He began to understand. He was not dealing with ordinary intelligence. All this had been carefully planned. There was behind this adventure a brain which could anticipate his actions. If only he had had the sense to bring O'Holleran along!

Wardlaw went over to the window and sat down again. There was a real struggle in front, then? They hadn't been afraid to chloroform him. Rather ominous significance. To gain their ends, then, they would stop at nothing. It was something to his advantage that he could arrive thus quickly at this conclusion. He must always remain on board at night; no prowling about Aden, Colombo, Penang, or Singapore; he must give them no opportunity to disable him physically. The next best thing for his mysterious assailants, supposing eventually they did not get to that kitbag in the bed, would be his temporary or permanent elimination from the game.

"How old was Cupid?" "*Beware the little yellow men.*" From now on he would leave nothing to chance. He would base all his future actions upon his intimate knowledge of brown and yellow peoples. He would not play into their hands, as many a white man had, by considering his cunning superior to theirs. He sensibly knew that it was not. Only Japs could have crawled across his room without his hearing them. There was still a bit of puzzle. Why hadn't they entered the room during his absence? Perhaps it was

due to an inherent trait: having once planned a certain method of attack, your Japanese never turns until he has tried it.

Having taken this orientation of a novel situation, Wardlaw went to bed, confident that he would not be disturbed again that night. Nor was he.

The next morning he was none the worse for the midnight adventure. Physically he was normal; mentally he had never felt so keen in all his life. To get to Hong Kong in spite of all!

Deep down in his heart he knew that he was acting wrongly in one respect, but his stubbornness would not permit him to change his course. And some one, being aware of this characteristic, built accordingly.

"How old was Cupid?" The phrase kept running through his head. How the old boy must have chuckled over it! How he loved a good joke, a good story! Nobody like him. What a father he would have made for some man—John Wardlaw, for instance, who had really never known a father. Henry Ainslee! All right, if he failed the old boy, it would be because his ticket was going to take him a good deal farther than Hong Kong. All he wanted was a foot on the deck of the P. and O. liner.

At nine-thirty Wardlaw stepped into the train, found a seat in a smoking compartment, hoisted his kitbags to the rack and lighted his pipe.

Just as the train began to move, a Japanese came in and took the seat opposite Wardlaw. It happened to be the only one vacant. He

bobbed and smiled at everyone. There was an exaggerated quirk to his eyes that made one suspect that the owner saw the world only as a huge joke, never laughing out loud at it, but always on the verge. A little investigation, however, might have disclosed the fact that they were singularly humorless eyes.

Shortly after the three Englishmen who were the other occupants of the compartment—officers returning to their posts in India—and Wardlaw opened their newspapers. When he reached the fashion-news, Wardlaw lowered his sheet. The Jap was vainly endeavoring to roll a cigarette the American way, and his knees were peppered with golden flake.

Wardlaw smiled amiably. "Let me show you how to do that."

The Jap smiled gratefully and passed the paper and tobacco. Wardlaw laid a paper on his left palm, sprinkled some tobacco on it and with a few manipulations—so rapid that they were almost sleight-of-hand—rolled a perfect cigarette, which he extended.

"By Jove!" cried one of the Englishmen, who had been an interested spectator. "That's clever of you. With one hand! And I've tried the bally trick with two hands a thousand times and can't make it."

"*Trick* is the word," replied Wardlaw. "An old cowboy trooper of mine taught me how to do it."

"The American Army?"

"Resigned."

"Saw some of your chaps in China—lanky youngsters. Rather fooled you, you know;

didn't seem up to the mark until they got into the shindy. Not much on discipline, I take it."

"That depends. We try to educate our men into thinking fighters. We want every man an officer embryo."

"It can't be done," declared the Englishman.

"See!" interrupted the Jap triumphantly.

"Very well done," said Wardlaw.

Once more the newspapers crackled, but Wardlaw only pretended to read. All cut-and-ried, he thought. Had this fellow been in his room, or was he the director? Wardlaw knew that no one carried that American brand of tobacco without knowing how to roll an ordinary cigarette. The little yellow man knew all about it; his awkwardness had been assumed to attract attention. During the conversation with the English officer, Wardlaw had not neglected to watch the Jap obliquely. The clumsy efforts had continued for a space; then with a sly observant roll of his tight little eyes, the trick was done almost as well as Wardlaw himself could have done it. He wanted to strike up an acquaintance with John Wardlaw, who was in a most receptive mood, having anticipated something like this the moment he got onto the train. That there had been a vacant seat opposite was merely accident; sooner or later, between Cairo and Port Saïd, the little yellow man would have created a similar situation.

Rather clumsy, but Wardlaw knew that the things to follow would not be.

At noon the Englishmen went in to the dining car. Wardlaw, however, had long since decided to stick to the compartment for the four and a half hours to Port Saïd. Never again would he take his eyes off that kitbag until its contents were safely in the purser's keeping.

"You are returning to Japan?" he asked, ready to pick up the thread held out by the cigarette episode.

"Oh, yes. I was recently graduated from Yale."

"Suppose you'll be glad to see cherry-blossoms again and wisteria in the spring."

"Oh, yes. I have been away six years."

"I often wonder how many Yale students there are in Japan. You are all for education."

The other expanded. Astute and cunning, the race has not yet learned to cover the chinks in the armor of self-esteem. They are childishly eager for compliments.

"P. and O. boat?"

"Oh, yes. My father owns a nursery in Yokohama. Here is my card."

Wardlaw gravely offered his in return.

"You will excuse me," said Mr. Huroki. "After all, I think I shall go to the dining car. It will be my last opportunity of the kind. Will you not join me?"

"No, thanks. I am waiting until I get on board."

Mr. Huroki bobbed and took himself off. Wardlaw stared at the endless reaches of desert sand.

To Wardlaw's mind, Mr. Huroki was playing his game clumsily; and yet he knew that in the days close at hand he would have to look sharp. There was no bitterness in his heart toward Huroki. The Jap would naturally do for his cause what he, Wardlaw, was ready at all times to do for his. And from the Japanese point of view, Huroki had a better right in China than had John Wardlaw. It was going to be the old story of the survival of the fittest.

The rest of the journey was uneventful. When the train arrived in Port Saïd, Wardlaw lowered his kitbags and carried them as far as the gangplank, where he beckoned to a white-coated steward.

"Cabin Two-twenty-four, steward. I'll be close at your heels."

As the steward started up the gangplank, Wardlaw paused. It was not an indecisive pause; it was, rather, an abrupt halt.

There she was, almost within touch of his hand, her trim body in pongee, her black hair bundled carelessly under a Panama—lovely. He liked the set of her shoulders. He liked the way she stood up. Alone! It made patent her courage and resource. Had he fought shy of women all these years because he had been less afraid of them than of the possibility of becoming attached to one who possessed neither of these attributes? He hated wishy-washy women, who wanted to cling, lean, depend. Of course, a wife would mean something; but a comrade, now, like this young woman a stride in front of him!



He smiled, for the advice of the professor up at Simla came back. "Play the cave-man. Pick out one that hasn't any brother." His imagination caught fire. He would know her. He knew that the old failing would pounce upon him, that he would stammer, stumble and bump into things; but he also knew that this time he would stick it out.

The passengers behind Wardlaw began to grumble, and he was forced to continue up the gangplank. The unknown seemed to be in a hurry, for she firmly elbowed her way ahead of others, advising her steward occasionally. She reached the deck before Wardlaw and disappeared.

A jam took place in the main companion, and Wardlaw found himself in the very middle of it. Could he have done so, he would have backed out and gone to his cabin through the smoke room companion. This ship was an old friend, and he knew the lay of her decks tolerably well. Only two months gone he had crossed the Yellow Sea in her to Yokohama, to make connections with the Pacific Mail.

During this congestion in the main companion, he lost track of the steward who had his kitbags; and this set him fretting and fuming until a thoroughfare was established. He hurried to his cabin, to find the kitbags on the lounge under the port and the regular cabin steward puttering about.

"How do you do, sir?"

"With you again, George."

"Yes, sir. The Captain ordered me to tell

you to go up to the bridge. He wishes to see you."

Wardlaw closed the port, locked his door and went up to the bridge. Captain Murfree hailed him pleasantly.

"Saw your name on the list, Wardlaw. Come and dine with me in my cabin to-night. You'll sit at my table during the voyage?"

"I certainly shall not."

The sailor laughed. "Still shy of squawking females. Came back rather fast from America, didn't you?"

"Business."

"Then you didn't get that fishing-trip you were talking about?"

"No—worse luck. What are you looking at me like that for?"

"Am I looking at you like that?" countered the sailor humorously.

"Anything wrong with my tie, or have I got my hat on hindside before?"

"It might happen that I'm only glad to see you. Didn't they feed you well in Cairo?"

"Shame on me!" Wardlaw laughed in his turn. "I'm acting as though I had a grouch. My apologies. What time will you be having dinner?"

"Seven-thirty."

"I'll be there, if only for the sake of those fat cigars of yours."

Wardlaw climbed down the ladder and returned to his cabin. An old traveler, he opened one of his kitbags and proceeded to hang up his clothes in the locker and lay away his shirts and collars in the drawers.

The Oriental twilight was falling swiftly outside, and so he turned on the lights, selected another key from his ring and started to open the kitbag he had so carefully guarded. For some reason the key did not slip in with its usual smoothness. After a third trial, however, the lock opened, and Wardlaw stretched back the frame—and stared down, transfixed with bewilderment!

## CHAPTER VI

WHAT Wardlaw saw would have transfixed any shy bachelor: a pair of long golden silk stockings, stretched across an unnamable something as white as snow and as filmy as fog. From a corner roguishly peeked the scarlet tip of a Moroccan slipper. From a little bouquet of dried green leaves there rose faintly an exquisite perfume—lemon-verbena. Not his kitbag, but a woman's! It was so unaccountable, so absurd a situation, that he stared on, hypnotized.

Subconsciously one thing made an indelible impression—the strange and rather sinister similarity between this kitbag and his own. Label for label, it was almost the exact counterpart of the kitbag which was at this moment the most precious thing in the world. And while his subconsciousness went on printing and storing away the amazing fact of the resemblance, his whole conscious thought was focused upon those silk stockings.

“Good Lord!”

Some subtle inner warning galvanized him into immediate action. He shut the frame swiftly, caught the handles and dashed out of the cabin into the companion. Two minutes later he burst into the purser's office.

"There's been a mistake somewhere. Some woman has got my kitbag, and I've got hers!" he announced breathlessly.

The purser laughed. "Your kitbag just turned up. The lady seemed quite as excited as you. The bags certainly look alike. Here you are, Mr. Wardlaw. Fault of one of the stewards, probably."

Overjoyed, Wardlaw swung his bag off the counter and without question marched off to his cabin. But the sweat was beginning to flow from the roots of his hair.

"I'm in luck, and no mistake!"

He lifted the bag to the lounge and opened it. He flung the contents about haphazardly until the bag was cleared. The bottom looked innocent enough. At each corner was a brass-headed nail. He pressed the two at one end and raised the leather, revealing a secret bottom. Reposing snugly in this bottom was a black leather portfolio. Japan would have given a million out of hand for the secret it held. The sigh Wardlaw released came from the bottom of his heart. A narrow squeak. He drew his free hand across his forehead. He would put an end to all this fuss and worry by placing the portfolio in the purser's safe at once.

The Japs were after him—not the least doubt of that. But how much they knew was another matter. Certainly Carrington would have tipped his hint anonymously. Otherwise a bit of backfire would mark his commercial downfall. If it should be learned that he had given away a secret like this,

merely to make the merger possible, the Street would never trust him again. "Watch your kitbags," Ainslee had warned without the least idea of what they contained. That was like the old boy, who was sometimes known as Old Details. Wardlaw deduced that Carrington had mentioned his kitbags to the Japanese Consulate in Naples. Nothing more would be necessary. Since the Hu-peh canal deal, the Japanese secret service had taken peculiar interest in the doings of John Wardlaw, civil engineer.

For several years he had carried these kitbags, and both had secret bottoms. The idea had come to him originally because of the pestiferous curiosity of the natives. World over, they had to pry into things, not with any idea of stealing, but because of that inherent curiosity to see "the white man's things." First, he had stowed away his correspondence and money in these compartments. Then hazardous journeys came, when it was of the utmost importance to keep his affairs from the knowledge of rival concerns.

Only one other person knew of the existence of these secret bottoms—Henry Ainslee. It had occurred to Wardlaw that he might some day be laid away by accident, and some one in authority must know where he kept his valuable papers. Naturally he took Ainslee into his confidence.

He dressed for dinner, whistling snatches from half-forgotten light operas. Occasionally, though, his hands would pause and his eyes become fixed. Lemon-verbena! Strange,

but of all perfumes that was his favorite—that and lavender—sweet, natural perfumes which never insisted upon being recognized, which when detected seemed instantly to vanish in sheer modesty.

At length he finished dressing, picked up the portfolio, balanced it thoughtfully on his hand, made as though to open it, reconsidered, snuggled it under his arm and once more sought the purser.

“I wish to deposit this with you, if you please.” The purser accepted the portfolio and extended his signature-book, which Wardlaw signed. “I am going to ask you for a receipt.”

“Not necessary, Mr. Wardlaw.”

“I prefer it—in case I might not be able to sign your book.”

“Oh, I see. Might miss the boat somewhere along the route.”

“You never can tell,” said Wardlaw.

“Good evening.”

“Ah! Good evening, Mr Huroki,” returned Wardlaw genially. He looked down into the burning black eyes of the Jap. “How is *Dai Nippon*?”

“The pearl of Japan—*Hondo!* Is not my country beautiful?” Huroki thrust forward a small bag of gold and a letter of credit. “In a few months—cherry-blossoms! I shall never forget my first sight of ripe cherries in your country.” He signed the book. “Do you play auction?”

“Whenever I get the chance,” said Wardlaw. He now could play any game that came

along. The O. C. C. would go along, no matter what befell him.

"Suppose we start a game to-night?" was Huroki's suggestion.

"That depends upon how long the Captain keeps me in his cabin," answered Wardlaw, stuffing the receipt into the unused watch-pocket in the top of his trousers. I am dining with him to-night."

"I shall be in the smoke room all the evening."

"Now, I wonder!" mused the purser as Huroki stepped outside.

"About what?" asked Wardlaw, happy and light of heart.

"Why that Jap has been hanging around here for more than an hour. The moment you came in, he followed."

"Met him on the train, and he's looking to me for a game of bridge. All educated Japs have gone mad over auction. It's putting *Go* on the shelf. Thanks." Wardlaw swung out of the office.

The purser stooped before his safe and carefully studied the portfolio intrusted to his care. He turned it over and over.

"Bally odd, if you should ask me. But it's none of my business. What's his idea of a receipt? Not necessary."

Wardlaw presented himself at the Captain's door at seven-thirty, and was cheerily bidden to enter.

"How's your appetite?"

"It's particularly keen. In fact, I'm starved."



"Soup, Rao!" cried the Captain to his handsome Cingalese servant.

Wardlaw thoroughly enjoyed that dinner; it was just the kind of an affair he needed after all this tension. Nevertheless his effervescence fell steadily. By the time the Captain had passed his marvelous cigars, Wardlaw's gayety consisted mainly of vocal affirmatives and short nods. The sailor dug into his short gray beard thoughtfully.

"What's on your mind?"

"Lots."

"You started out fine; but the barometer's acting queerly. What kind of lots?"

"Battle, murder, and sudden death," answered Wardlaw; but he said it lightly. "I've been thinking."

"Better be careful. If you think in this part of the world, you're likely never to get the kink out," the Captain bantered.

Wardlaw took out a sealed envelope which he studied for a moment; then passed it over to the sailor. "A favor. I want you to put this in your private safe. There's a receipt inside for something I've left with the purser. Now, if anything should happen to me while I'm aboard your old hooker—if I shouldn't turn up for breakfast some fine morning—you will send a wireless to this name and address. When the boat reaches Hong Kong, you will give the addressee this envelope and explain to the purser."

"Happen to you? What the deuce do you mean?"

"Sorry, but I can't explain."

"Are you spoofing me?"

"I am very serious. I'm in danger, but I haven't the least idea what this danger is or from which way it will come. It may not materialize at all; but I must guard against the possibility."

"On my ship?"

"On any ship I sail on. I can't tell you any more."

"Somebody after the original package?"

"Something like that. The only way you can help me is to put this envelope in your safe and remember my instructions regarding it."

"No sooner said than done. Queer old world, these parts. All right. If you won't tell me, you won't."

"Where do you get these cigars?" asked Wardlaw irrelevantly.

"Gibraltar. Little two-by-four shop the tourist hasn't discovered yet. I'll follow out your instructions. And if at any time you need help, come to me. Take a fistfull of those cigars and come along up to the bridge with me."

"I'm restless. I'll trot around the decks. Thanks for a bully good dinner."

As Wardlaw stepped over the threshold, the Captain beckoned to his Cingalese servant.

"Rao, that gentleman is Wardlaw Sahib. You remember him. When you are off duty I want you to watch him—take note of all who approach him. Watch out for people who seem to be watching him. Wardlaw Sahib is my friend."

"Yessir!"

"And report to me every night."

"Yessir!"

"He's just gone out to starboard. You might take a peek at his back. I'll have a steward sent in to clean up."

The barefooted Cingalese went out at once, and from afar watched Wardlaw, who was leaning against the rail smoking. Perhaps half an hour passed without either Wardlaw or the Cingalese moving. Promenaders passed and repassed, but none of them stopped. At length a woman dropped out and stood by the rail perhaps half a dozen feet from Wardlaw. The Cingalese watched her closely, but she never turned her head; she simply stared at the opal mists of the desert. Even after Wardlaw tossed away the end of his cigar and left the rail, the Cingalese remained at his post of observation, no doubt held there by the subtle attraction of the pearly half-moon of the woman's shoulders. When she finally moved on, the Cingalese padded back to the Captain's cabin.

Entering the smoke room, his soul filled with an odd temptation—the desire to play with danger, to court it, now that nothing could stop the big wheels from turning to their prescribed ends—Wardlaw accepted Huroki's invitation to play a few rubbers of auction. Where were Huroki's comrades? Steerage-passengers, doubtless; and doubtless he had nothing to fear physically from Huroki and everything to fear from the men in the steerage.

Sometimes, when he took the "dummy," Wardlaw's thoughts broke away from the game. He knew he was going to meet her. But how? Would he turn tail the last moment? The fact that he had vowed to meet her gave to the venture a kind of sportsmanship; and because he was a thorough sportsman, he was determined to play his bid. Will-power, the professor had said. Had he ever really used it against his imbecile bashfulness? Only once that he could remember, and the memory wasn't a pleasant one.

"Your deal, Mr. Wardlaw."

"Beg pardon!"

Never before had any woman attracted him like this one. He had seen women quite as beautiful, quite as alluring, but the magnet had never been powerful enough to perform a greater miracle than to excite his imagination and wistfulness.

By the time he had lost three rubbers and became aware of Huroki's chagrin, Wardlaw awoke to the fact that he was playing auction in the most mechanical manner. He pushed the cards to the centre of the table.

"No more for me, gentlemen. I'm spoiling a good game. Not up to the mark."

He was rising from his chair, when an odd expression on Huroki's face caught his attention. The Japanese was staring at the opened port behind Wardlaw, who turned instinctively. For a space not more than the intake of a breath, he gazed into two calm, incurious gray eyes. Most women would have been startled by the suddenness of his turn.

Unagitated—at least outwardly—this one turned away. In another woman Wardlaw would have described this superior calmness as boldness. Not a flutter of an eyelid; a glance, and she was gone, without the slightest indication of precipitancy.

Huroki laughed. "The lady has been watching us for ten minutes."

"And I frightened her away!" said Wardlaw, smiling.

He went outside tingling. But the desire to give chase was short-lived. Still afraid of them, wasn't he!

The trip down the Red Sea to Aden was uneventful, save for a minor incident. At night he left the cabin door open the length of the hook-latch to catch what currents of air there were in the companions. One night, as he lay in his bunk dreaming with his eyes open, he heard the latch rattle, then fall with a little smack against the door. Instantly he flooded the cabin with light, swung out of the bunk and dashed into the companion. He had a fleeting glimpse of a Lascar. At least the prowler wore a brown rag of a turban. Still, the trespasser was rather too squat and chunky to pass as a Lascar, proverbially thin. A Jap? And after that receipt?

Her name was Allison. He had found that out from the dining room chart. And she sat at the Captain's table, at his right; and the old sea-dog rarely failed to occupy his chair at dinner. From his seat at the Doctor's table Wardlaw watched her. He could do so without turning his head. The Captain—

who, as Wardlaw knew, was rather hard to please—evidently found her to his liking. From soup to dessert there was always a broad grin on his weather-roughened face. Often now before dinner Wardlaw would observe the two promenading arm in arm. So he maneuvered skillfully to pass them, the original idea being to watch for a sign from the sailor. But there was never anything more than a cheery salute.

Wardlaw arraigned himself bitterly. There was nothing in the world to prevent him from boldly asking the Captain to present him—nothing but the lack of boldness. He knew that there was no aloofness on the Captain's part. Times without number he had given the Captain the same impression he had given the world at large—that he did not care for the companionship of women.

On the afternoon of the second day out from Aden—about three, when passengers are snoozing, when every one is off duty but the steersman and the Chinese stokers, when stewards and stewardesses are generally playing hooky—Wardlaw left the stuffy smoke room and went down to his cabin to replenish his pouch, which was empty.

He grasped the handle of the door, turned and pushed. The door did not open. He thought that singular. He had certainly left the door unlocked when he had gone up to lunch. The little companion was dim. He bent toward the keyhole to find the key resting in the lock. Absentmindedness—he had evidently locked the door without being con-

scious of the act. A mighty good thing for him that he had taken the portfolio to the purser. He turned the key and pushed the door inward.

In the middle of the cabin, her hands clutching a magnificent peacock kimono about her throat, her hair disheveled and her gray eyes as wide as they possibly could be—stood Miss Allison!

## CHAPTER VII

WARDLAW'S surprise is not to be described by any word-picture. It was so tremendous that it went beyond the bounds of ordinary definition. Locked in his cabin! In the most gorgeous kimono he had even seen, her very dishevelment accentuating her loveliness! He was conscious of that, anyhow. But he was not conscious of the fact that when a woman is beautiful in dishevelment, the last word has been said in testimony.

How long the tableau lasted neither was ever able to determine. A worldly-wise man—or rather a man versed in the ways of women—would have been first to break it. The advantage was all on Wardlaw's side. Vaguely this thought percolated through his bewilderment, but he could not find any verbal handle to it. Locked in his cabin! His mental processes began and ended with that.

Shrewdly reasoning out his mental condition, the young woman recovered first.

"I began to believe I should never get out," she said. "Where are the stewards? I rang and rang. I have been here fully an hour."

"An hour?" he repeated stupidly.

"It is horribly embarrassing," she went on, a little more rapidly, her fingers tightening in the soft folds of the kimono. "It was all done so suddenly that I forgot to call out."



Wardlaw stared on.

"You are Captain Wardlaw. I am Miss Allison. My cabin is opposite. I was reading. My door was open to catch what air there was, when I saw a man slink into this cabin. I instantly concluded that a Lascar had no business here; so I got up and ran across. He was going through your things. Evidently he did not hear my approach. When I seized him by the arm, he swung violently about, flung me against the bunk, transferred the key, and the thing was done before I could recover my balance. But he wasn't a Lascar; he was a Japanese."

"A Japanese?"

A little red slipper began to pat the floor impatiently. "I can easily imagine your astonishment. I hope you will do me the honor to imagine mine." The smile, however, was rather propitiating.

"Good heavens!"—and with this homely ejaculation, Wardlaw broke through his trance. "A thousand pardons for my stupidity!"

"Granted. I was never more glad to see any one. I couldn't call from the port. I just had to wait; and it wasn't an enjoyable ordeal. I believe your bell-wires have been cut. I rang long enough."

Wardlaw stepped inside, climbed into the upper bunk and inspected the molding which covered the wires.

"They are cut. Now, I wonder when they did that? The bell was all right early this morning. Lucky I needed some tobacco, Miss

Allison, or you'd have had to stay here until I came down to dress for dinner. It was mighty good of you to take all this trouble. It would have been simpler had you rung your own bell."

"I thought of that—when it was too late. I don't believe he took anything."

"It wouldn't matter if he had."

He stood aside, and as she passed, she gave him a friendly nod. As the door of her cabin closed, he stared at it thoughtfully, then closed his own—and executed a light fantastic which, due to a sudden beam roll, toppled him against the wash-bowl.

Of all the bizarre introductions! And nothing could have happened more to his advantage. He had met her, talked with her, and shared an adventure which was intimately their own. All the foreground—and it was in crossing this foreground that Wardlaw encountered his main difficulty in regard to women—which must be covered from introduction to genuine acquaintance, done away with in such an unforgettable manner!

Why, so far as he was concerned, heaven bless the meddling Jap!

Clever of Huroki to entice him into the smoke room each afternoon and evening so that his subordinates might have plenty of time to search the cabin. After that receipt, and they would keep after it so long as they believed it to be in his possession. And he couldn't very well declare his hand by dropping the hint that the receipt was in the Captain's private safe.

He was reasonably certain that Huroki was working blindly on the supposition that something of immeasurable value to the Japanese Government was in John Wardlaw's possession. Otherwise Huroki would not have bothered him; he would have sent his information to Tokio, and a callous thumb would have reached out and pressed down upon Peking so hard that it would be difficult for an American to purchase a chow dog.

Another thought rather chilled Wardlaw. He knew from experience that the Jap was prone to speculate dispassionately upon the future. Eventually unable to find anything in John Wardlaw's cabin or on his person, they might speculate on the supposition that it would be better for Japan's commercial future if a certain civil engineer disappeared permanently from the haunts of men. Next to finding out the truth, a delay would best serve.

So! He just had to get to Hong Kong. No shore-leave, and his chin toward his shoulder from now on.

How supremely beautiful she was! No hysterics, no outward sign of fright, the glance from her great gray eyes unshaken by a situation which would have appalled an ordinary woman. Agitated, yes, but not through fear. And now he could approach her as easily as though he had known her all his life. It was wonderful.

It seemed to him that he had finally emerged, that the old-time barriers had been blown away. When he went into dinner,

later, he smiled warmly at his table-mates. The sense of buoyancy was so strangely new that he bubbled.

Doctor Phillipson eyed him interestedly. He had never seen Wardlaw effervesce before, and tried to reason out the cause. He had known Wardlaw for several years, and many a rubber they had played together at the club in Hong Kong. A quiet man, with a dry humor and an even temper nothing seemed able to ruffle; and this effervescence sat oddly upon him. Once he followed Wardlaw's wandering gaze, and discovered a lovely profile. But this glance had to be repeated many times before the Doctor permitted himself to hazard a guess. What, Wardlaw? That would be fine business. The old woman-hater! Had he put his finger into the web at last?

Toward the end of the dinner a steward leaned over Wardlaw's shoulder and whispered that the Captain would be pleased to see him in the cabin for coffee.

Wardlaw accepted the invitation readily. He wanted to ask the Captain a thousand questions, questions until now he had not had the courage to voice. But he did not have the opportunity to ask them that night. One does not ask questions relative to the third person when the third person is present.

"Miss Allison has consented to join us, Mr. Wardlaw." That was the Captain's way of introducing them.

"We have met before," said Miss Allison gravely. But there was a flash of whimsical

humor in her eyes that put Wardlaw unbelievably at his ease. It thrilled him, too. For what did that flash convey but the unspoken words: "We have a little secret, you and I, but we sha'n't share it with anybody?"

At nine, having drunk the Captain's coffee and inspected his collection of chrysoprase, Wardlaw and Miss Allison went down to the promenade deck.

"Shall we walk a bit?" she suggested.

"Yes, let's walk!"—with boyish eagerness.

He had been wondering, once they reached the deck, what he should do, how he should act, and this suggestion solved the difficulty. It even put a halt to the return of the old shyness. Things had gone smoothly enough, with the old sailor to bolster up the lapses, but how to act when alone with her was another matter. And yet, above all things, he wanted to be alone with her. He did not inquire into the reason as the hour was still to come wherein all these unusual new stirrings would merge into one stupendous fact.

"Suppose we go up to the bow and watch the phosphorescence break against the cut-water? It is wonderful sometimes when we run into a school of flying-fish. They look like fish of fire. Of course you have seen it many times."

"And never tire of it. But you seem to be an old traveler."

"I've gone about some. I love the sea. I like to look off. Cities bother me; I can't breathe deeply, surrounded by brick."

They did not speak again until they stood looking down the cutwater. Waves of fire rolled on each side. Presently they entered a school of flying-fish—for they also fly at night—and the fireworks began. The young woman uttered little cries of pleasure, and often flung downward a bare arm to direct his gaze toward beautiful curls of living water.

He fell to wondering how it possibly could be. Here he was, for the first time in his life, in a situation which formerly would have tied his tongue and shaken his knees, feeling and acting like a normal human being. So many years wasted, so many simple pleasures like this lost because of his abysmal idiocy.

As though there were two Wardlaws, he heard the other recounting an experience on an atoll in the lagoon of which flying-fish spawned. Night after night the whole lagoon had sparkled with blue fire, and always at a certain hour appeared the sinister fin of a marauding shark.

“And so you are Captain Wardlaw!” she said suddenly. “I have been hearing about you.”

“Captain tell you I was a grouch?”

“Indeed, no! He said you would be perfect but for one thing.”

“And what was that?”

“I haven't been able to get him to reveal that.” She laughed joyously. “And you're the man who built the Kotun Bridge!”

Subtle flattery! He wouldn't have been human if he had not expanded under it.

“You have really seen it, then?”

"I have. It was a wonderful bit of engineering."

"It was great sport, anyhow. I like to tackle jobs like that."

"Liking makes a great many things possible. Look! there's a porpoise!"

When the fire died away, he spoke. "How small this world is! I first saw you in a theatre in New York."

"You did?"

"When I saw you on the *Cretic*, I was rather startled. When you came into the dining room at Shepheard's the other night, I was dumfounded. When I saw you walking up the gangplank at Port Said—well, I haven't got any more adjectives."

"It must have looked odd. Coincidences have a way of mystifying us. Well, we did not have to wait for any one to introduce us."

"I must have acted like a yokel."

"On the contrary, you were very nice about it. I never saw any one quite so surprised as you were."

"I'm mighty glad it happened. Another man would have known you long ago."

"I doubt that. Perhaps I did not want to meet any one—until now. You never saw me speak to any one on the *Cretic*, did you?"

"I can't recollect that I did."

"I'm a moody individual. My own thoughts, sometimes, are very good company. I am used to silences."

"So am I; but I cannot say that I am fond of them."

She held out her wrist-watch toward the

moon. "Eleven o'clock! The time has passed very quickly." She turned away from the cutwater.

So—reluctantly on his part—they returned to the promenade deck. The turbaned figure behind the windlass stood up and stifled a yawn.

Wardlaw turned in, his whole view of life radically changed. He wasn't going to be afraid of them any more. What wonderful creatures they were, close up! And there was an added charm of mystery about her. Whither was she bound, and upon what errand?

Across the way the subject of these cogitations did not go to bed at once. She knelt on the lounge and stared out of the port for a long time. The expression on her face was dreamy, but not to a translatable degree. By and by she sighed, slid off the lounge and stood before the mirror. Her gray eyes gazed back at her somberly.

"Cheat!" she whispered.

She undressed and put on her kimono and sat on the edge of the bunk. She flung loose her hair, and the glossy black coils spread and rippled to her knees. Slowly she began to brush it—and she smiled. A child, seeing that smile, would have run to her with open arms.

It was one o'clock when she turned out the lights.

Mr. Huroki went to bed about the same time. His blank face was quite as blank as usual; but the occasional gesture, the flash



from his tightly bound eyes, would have warned another of his race that Mr. Huroki was in a towering rage about something.

On the following night, at eleven-thirty, Wardlaw stepped out of the smoke room and began his usual mile walk around the decks. His stride was springy, for his heart was light. A wonderful day! They had had luncheon abaft the smoke room, tea with the Captain, and had gone up to the bow after dinner. She was glorious. He was no longer diffident. The change which had taken place in him, all within forty hours, was really amazing. She made it so easy for him that it seemed as if he had known her all his life.

The deck was white with moonshine, and as he came down to port side, the ventilators and funnels threw dead black shadows across the silvered teak, shortening and lengthening to the gentle roll.

He was in the act of passing a cluster of ventilators when two shadowy forms sprang out from behind them. His lively backward movement was anticipated by a sinewy foot. A second later he lay helpless on his back.

## CHAPTER VIII

**I**NSTANTLY Wardlaw relaxed. The peculiar strain on his arms, which were being held extended beyond his head, and the numbness below his knees, convinced him that he had been thrown by a trick of ju-jitsu and that if he struggled, a broken arm might be the result. Besides, he had nothing in his pockets worth a struggle.

He lay in a black shadow, and he could see but little—the few stars low in the west, and the dim outline of the man who held his legs by kneeling on them. Of the man who held his arms he could see nothing.

Swiftly and systematically a hand went through his pockets, all of them. Then he was released, suddenly. By the time he got to his feet, the deck was empty. They had left his money and watch, but every scrap of paper was gone, even the letter he had started to scribble on that night in the Shepheard dining room.

He appreciated the utter uselessness of reporting the affair and going down into the steerage. Well as he knew them, all Japs looked alike in the dark. He would never be able to identify either of his assailants. And not finding what they sought—the receipt for the portfolio—they would immediately destroy what they had stolen.

He proceeded to the nearest companion and limped down to his cabin, chagrined. They had caught him napping. Hereafter he would take his constitutional when others were about. He owed it to Ainslee not to grow careless. The hard part of it would be that he wouldn't dare leave the old hooker until he reached Hong Kong; and a night in Colombo was worth a thousand in Bagdad, these days.

And what a surprise he would have for the old Boy when the proper time came!

As he lay in his bunk, another thought came to him. Supposing Carrington took it into his head to play up with the Japs? He had said "Five years," and Carrington would know what that meant. Supposing then, that Carrington was aiming to put his own hands upon the contents of that portfolio, later, under the General Construction Company's flag, to play it fifty-fifty with some Japanese firm? Carrington had, by tipping the Japs, proved that he was equal to such a game. The Open Door meant little or nothing to the O. C. C. supply man. Money—that was the keystone of his existence. So John Wardlaw must get to Hong Kong.

Why hadn't he brought O'Holleran along? The boy was a born *Lecocq*; and he had the Irishman's love for mystery and intrigue, which John Wardlaw had not.

"I can build with the best of them; but I'm a mollycoddle at this game. And I just as good as told Carrington what we chaps had done!"

He turned the pillow over, found a cool spot on it and fell asleep.

It soon became evident to everybody on board that Miss Allison was going out of her way to be pleasant to Wardlaw, and he was the last to realize that.

When a pretty woman sets out to engage a man, she generally succeeds. When she is beautiful and skillful, her success is unmodified; it is absolute. The latent and inexpressible gallantry in him awoke, and began to press outward, groping. He was a most willing victim—and if the glances of the British officers meant anything, an envied one.

Shuffle-board, rummy, Canfield, books, tea, walks; sometimes she read aloud to him; sometimes it was the first dog-watch up in the bow, when the porpoises were at play. With a man's usual vanity he became elated with the idea that he was conquering himself. He began to confide in her, told her about those lonely years and the cause. But he never spoke of his work unless she laid traps for him; and even then, half the time he sensed the traps and shied away.

The day before they landed at Colombo, he was profoundly stirred by an incident which outwardly seemed trivial enough. He had, with his usual guilelessness, long since decided that because she wore no gold band she was unattached. How was he to know that in these benighted times women lay aside their wedding-rings in order not to fall prey to an old-time superstition?

They were sitting in their steamer-chairs in

a corner of the boat-deck when one of the deck stewards approached her with a wireless.

"Will you excuse me?" she said to Wardlaw.

"Certainly." He rose and went over to the rail. Scarcely two minutes passed before she hailed him to return.

"Will you be so good as to throw these scraps overboard?"

He cupped his hands and she poured the minute scraps into the cup. He could not avoid noting the strange fire in her eyes, and he was sure that her hands trembled a little. Once more he went to the rail and flung the bits to the purpose of the wind. The flakes swooped, rose and soared; particles fluttered back to the ship and played a game of hide and seek among the ventilators. He returned to his chair.

He presently discovered that he could talk on one subject and think strongly on another. What he talked about were atolls; what he thought about were wireless messages. Was there some one back in the far country who had the right to send her wireless messages? Was this the first message or one of many? Never having been jealous, he was not familiar with the symptoms. He could not shut out the fire in her eyes; and by and by he began to find verbal navigation rather difficult.

"Don't you like to talk of your work?" she asked suddenly.

"Why—sometimes."

"But you're afraid that a butterfly such as

I am would not understand? Perhaps not all the technicalities. But a woman likes to hear a man tell of his own adventures, when they have been worth while, like yours."

"Adventures? All that was cut-and-dried stuff. You're trying to make it romantic."

"Work and romance are inseparable, though only poets comprehend that."

"That's like all poetry; musical but impractical. By the way, had you ever met that Jap Huroki before? I saw you chatting with him to-day."

"A chance acquaintance. I call him the Cork," she replied, laughing. "He bobs and bobs. But he has a wonderful knowledge of trees and flowers, and that always interests me."

"I know a sunflower from a hollyhock—that is, I used to; and that's about all."

"But you built the Kotun Bridge, the Andaman Breakwater, and the Hu-peh canals; and that's worth many gardens of flowers. Monuments! I'd rather build monuments than rose-gardens; only I'm a woman, and women's monuments are their children."

"You're not a suffragette, then?"

"I'm too busy."

"With what?" he asked thoughtlessly.

"That's my secret. We women generally carry one or more." And she eyed him obliquely. "I suppose you're going forward on another adventure."

"Work," he corrected. "I'm afraid the Captain's been filling your ears with a lot of nonsense."

"No. That's for younger men," she replied with an enigmatical smile. "There goes the first call for dinner. Till then!" She picked up her books.

After she was gone, he remained in her chair for several minutes. Finally he rose, sighing. Some one back home had the right to send her wireless messages!

As he passed the ventilators, he espied two bits of paper. He paused and stared down at them somberly. Ordinarily he would have gone on, but something impelled him to pick up those scraps which he recognized as belonging to the wireless she had received. He smothered his conscience, for it went against the grain to act like this. But the impellant was too strong; it was irresistible. On the first scrap he read the word *Car*, on the second, *China*. And the weight of a thousand years slipped from his shoulders. No lover would talk about China. He stuffed the bits of paper into his vest pocket—because they had once been touched by her.

They dropped anchor in the lovely harbor of Colombo at three the following afternoon. Many of the tourists were going to spend the night ashore, and the agents from the hotels had their hands full the moment they came up the ladder.

"I've got a room at the Galle Face," said Miss Allison exuberantly.

"I'm not going ashore," Wardlaw replied.

"Come in for the evening, anyway. Let's have dinner together, dance a little, and then you can return."

"But I can't dance."

"It's fun just watching."

"Sorry, but I've decided this voyage not to go ashore."

"Not even for dinner with me?"

"Ordinarily I'd go to the North Pole to dine with you."

"That wouldn't be half so pleasant as the Galle Face. Please!"

"No."

"Why?" she demanded.

"Because it is barely possible that if I went ashore I might never come back."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Away up back of Perak in Malacca there is a strange religious cult. The layman never sees these priests at worship. Just before they gather at the temple, they beat drums to warn away the layman. And woe to the trespasser! Perhaps I hear them."

"What a curious idea! You don't strike me as being superstitious. Come along and have dinner with me; and I'll promise to watch over you."

"How I'd like to go! No."

"Are you really in some kind of danger?" There was genuine anxiety in her tones.

"On my word, I don't know. That is all I can tell you. Go and have a good time, and tell me all about it to-morrow."

"This is the first time I've ever been refused like this. It's rather a novelty to find a man who can say No—and stick. I don't usually ask men to dine with me."



"I will give all I possess to be without responsibility at this moment."

"A mystery! You are embarked upon an adventure, then? That lightens my sense of chagrin. I shall write down in my diary: 'Captain Wardlaw refused to go ashore with me. A mysterious responsibility kept him on board ship.' Don't think you have offended me. You haven't. It takes a proper man to say no—to me. Good-by!"

As the tender drew away, she waved her hand cheerily. The women behind her, observing the act, shrugged and eyed each other significantly. A ship on a long voyage is quite as bad as the veranda of a summer hotel.

Miss Allison engaged a rickshaw and rode about town until six, then went out on the lovely red road to the Galle Face Hotel, where she dined alone. She was perfectly well aware of her status in the minds of the other women, but this only quickened her sense of humor.

At nine-thirty she returned to town, walked out to the end of the jetty and engaged a native boatman to row her back to the ship.

Meanwhile the Captain's Cingalese servant made a report that night.

"Wardlaw Sahib is always with the Mem-sahib."

"H'm!" mused the sailor. "Then he may be in danger after all."

"The man Huroki watches him often. He has dealings with two of his people in the steerage. He was angry the other night with one of them. Wardlaw Sahib's cabin stew-

ard says he has detected a Japanese prowling about the companion. Wardlaw Sahib did not go ashore to-night. But Huroki did."

"Where is the Memsahib?"

"She went ashore at five. That is all I have to report."

"Not enough to worry the galley cat."

At eleven o'clock Wardlaw leaned with his arms on the starboard rail of the boat-dick—in the little projection between two boats—and viewed the twinkling lights of Colombo. Each time the revolving light flashed eastward he saw a carved temple-top stand out vividly for an instant. Shadows passed to and fro across the gray water, where the reflections of ship lights danced on ripples stirred by the northeast trade.

Why, in the name of the seven wonders, hadn't he gone ashore with her? Would she be offended? Sheer stupidity; but that was John Wardlaw. He would have been far safer with her in a crowd than here, alone.

"Take care!" cried a woman's voice.

The next instant it seemed to Wardlaw that the bottom of the world had fallen out and he was going down—down—down!

## CHAPTER IX

WHEN the sensation of going down ceased, that of ascension immediately began. Wardlaw felt himself carried through a blackness so dense that he had to fight for his breath. Then—pop!—he was back into the real world again. He opened his eyes to observe that the ceiling of his cabin was splashed with racing gold—reflected sunlight from the water. What had seemed to him minutes had in reality been hours. He heard voices, but he could not see the speakers, because something was wrong with his bunk!

“A mighty narrow squeak.” Wardlaw recognized this voice; it was the Doctor’s. “Did he carry any money?”

“I don’t believe so.” This voice belonged to the Captain. “My ship, too! He said he was in danger, but he said he couldn’t tell where it was coming from. Some engineering deal which the Japs are interested in blocking. I can’t put the whole steerage in irons. It was never one of my Lascars.”

“What’s the row?” asked Wardlaw feebly.

“He’s come around! No talking, matey!” said the Doctor, bending over.

“What’s happened?”

“Well, somebody took a sudden dislike to you last night, and gave you a love tap that

would have sent you to Davy—but for one thing.”

“One thing. What was that?”

“It’ll keep. You stay in your bunk until to-morrow, just to be on the safe side. There’s a whale of a lump on the port side of your coco, and you couldn’t put a hat on if you wanted to.”

“Maybe I dreamed it, but I thought I heard a woman’s voice call out. I don’t recollect anything else.” Wardlaw discovered that by shifting his shoulders a trifle he could get his head at another angle. He saw two serious ruddy faces. “I’m all right—head-achy, but that’ll go away. I’ll be good and stick to the bunk if you’ll tell me what that one thing was.”

“It’ll keep,” repeated the Doctor. “The steward will watch over you until noon, when I’ll come down again. Come along, Captain. What he needs is real sleep.”

Wardlaw sensibly closed his eyes, for the glare hurt. So they had come at him boldly, and something had miraculously intervened? Sensing that there was now no possibility of getting the receipt—for whatever purpose they had in mind—the Japs had attacked him boldly and sinisterly; and but for a miracle John Wardlaw would at this moment be resting in the gray muck of the bay. If he hadn’t been mooning!

He dozed. By and by he heard voices, mere murmurs.

“Anybody there?” he called.

“I, sir,” answered the steward promptly.

"Bolster me up so that I can lie on my side."

"Yes, sir."

"That's better. Whom were you talking to?"

"I was humming a tune, sir," lied the steward.

"Ventriloquist—I see. I'm all right. Never mind trying to clean up."

"Doctor's orders you're not to talk, sir."

"Hang the Doctor's orders! I'm no infant."

Once more Wardlaw dozed, and gradually went down into sound slumber. The consciousness of a pleasant intermittent coolness eventually aroused him. He glanced ceilingward. The glare was gone. From this he gathered that he had slept well into the afternoon. Then he directed his attention to the shadow which rose and fell beside him.

Seated upon a camp-stool was Miss Allison, and in her hand was a palm-leaf. Her eyes were closed, as if a long vigil had wearied her. An almost irresistible desire seized him to reach out, catch the hand and kiss it. Queer, that he should have such a desire! How long had she been here?

Now that he saw the face for the first time in repose, he observed what he thought to be the character which lay behind it. It was more than a beautiful face. Unanimated, all the salient features were open to analysis, and the strength of the ensemble overshadowed the mere beauty. He was no judge of women's faces, but he was eminently a judge of men's; and there were characteristics here

that spoke of masculine attributes. That little break in the nose—the bridge—meant resolution; the sweep of the handsome mouth, firmness; the turn of the jaw, courage. What a woman!

He sighed. Her eyes opened quickly, and the fan dropped.

“Awake? Better?”

“Just now. Do you know that you are very beautiful?”

“Mercy, I thought you were a bashful man!”

“I don't know; I believe I've changed a lot.”

“No doubt of it. For weeks you never noticed me.”

“But I did!”

“Is there anything you might care to tell me?”

“Nothing.”

“The Doctor said I might look in if I didn't start you to talking.”

“What the Doctor says doesn't worry me.”

She began waving the fan again. Suddenly he reached out and caught her by the forearm. She gasped.

“What's the matter?”—anxiously.

“You surprised me.”

“That wasn't a cry of surprise; it was a gasp of pain.”

“Nonsense! Would you like some tea?”

“No; I want to talk.”

She got up. “That's against orders.”

“I want to know what happened last night. Nobody's told me yet.”

"To-morrow, when you're out on deck again. Good-by!"

"Just a minute! Please listen!"

She paused.

"Is there any way for me to get an ice-cream soda—chocolate preferred?"

"In this part of the world?"

"Yes. We get queer ideas, sometimes, we chaps who spend half our days in deserts and jungles. O'Holleran—one of my subordinates—is always moaning in his sleep for corned beef and cabbage. And I'm always wanting an ice-cream soda. I don't see anything so funny in that."

For she was laughing. "Some day I may tell you why I laugh. Good-by. I'll have them send you some tea." And she went out.

The door opened a quarter of an hour later, and the steward presented a tray with tea and toast.

"Take it away," ordered Wardlaw grumpily.

"But Miss Allison said you wanted some, sir."

"I did—but I don't."

Except for an occasional spell of light-headedness, Wardlaw was all right the next day. He wore his cap at a truculent angle—thereby keeping the inquisitive at bay and the lump in obscurity. But he kept to his chair most of the day. He was weak. She came and sat down beside him several times, but her visits were not of a sedative quality; she was up and away the moment he began to ask

questions. Once, however, she remained as long as half an hour. This was during Huroki's visit.

The little yellow man expressed lively sympathy. "You have had an accident, they tell me."

"Nothing serious. Some harbor thief got aboard and tried to rob me. But all my valuables are locked up, and my death wouldn't benefit anybody."

Wardlaw smiled affably, and Huroki returned the smile.

"I see," said the latter, shrugging. "You should have gone ashore with the rest of us."

"You don't like him," said Miss Allison when Huroki was gone. "Why do you play bridge with him so much?"

"I like to watch him. The Japs are interesting people."

"You spoke of danger the other night."

"Wasn't guesswork, was it?"

"You were expecting something like this. What have you been doing?"

"Who, I?"

"Yes. Why should the Japanese try to kill you?"

"How do you know it was a Jap?" he countered quickly.

"The Captain's Cingalese servant saw the affair."

"I heard a woman's voice call out. Was it you? Did you come back?"

"Why should I make a confidant of you? You will not make one of me."



"What do you wish to know?" He looked into her eyes with disconcerting frankness.

"You expected to be set upon. Why?"

"Miss Allison, there is a great business project going on—" he began.

Impulsively she put out her hand. "Wait! What prevented you from telling me the other night?"

"The knowledge that I had no right to tell you," he answered simply.

"Then don't tell me."

"You're the oddest woman I ever met."

"Most women are odd. We always want to know."

"You wanted to see if my loyalty was worth anything; is that it? Thanks for catching me up. I'm not so strong as I thought I was."

"The fault is mine. I had no right to press such questions."

He looked at her sharply. He wasn't sure, but there seemed to be an undertone of mockery. "I'll tell you all about it when we get to Hong Kong—that is, if you'll tell me why you laughed when I wanted a soda."

"Agreed. Do you know who Huroki is?"

"A recent graduate from Yale—so he says."

"Well, if I were you, I wouldn't play cards with him so much."

"Do you know what he is?"

"What's your idea?"

"Why, he may be in the Japanese secret service."

"Then it's world politics?"

There was a pause. He was the first to break it.

"Has it ever occurred to you that we white men are mighty unpoetical when we name our women?"

"Name our women?" she repeated vaguely.

"Yes. We call our women *Mary* or *Bess* or *Jane*; and where's the poetry in such names? To the American Indian, the Hindu, the Arab, and the yellow people—a name means something. The Indian calls his daughter Laughing-Waters; the Arab, the Wind-in-the-sky; the Jap, Lotus-Blossom. That's poetry."

"My name is Jean—if that's what you're after."

"That has a pleasant sound. But what does it mean?"

"Me," she said; and they both laughed.

One thing deeply puzzled him. She never spoke of home; never once, no matter how many clumsy traps he laid, did she lift the smallest end of the curtain. He was not ordinarily curious; but his phase held a fascination for him, and he was always maneuvering toward it.

The night they left Singapore he dined again with the Captain; and it was just after he had lighted his cigar that he summoned his courage and asked the sailor point blank what he knew about Miss Allison.

"Ripping young woman!" cried the Captain with honest enthusiasm. "I'm beginning to enjoy my dinners in the salon."

"Has she ever spoken of her family—her people?"

"Not that I recall. She's a mighty jolly

young woman, and a proper one. Are you looking for a past, young man?"

"I feel like a cad!" exclaimed Wardlaw. "But she interests me as no other woman ever did; and I want to know all about her. I don't stammer when I talk to her. I don't bump into things as I used to. I'm not a woman-hater. I've just been plain naturally scared of them."

"A bashful man? And I always thought that one of them had ripped your plates under the boiler-room! So you want to know all about her?" There was a twinkle in the Captain's blue eyes. "That's easily done."

"How?"

"Well, you might marry her."

"Marry her?" gasped Wardlaw.

"Yes. She'll tell you everything—or nothing, which is just as likely."

"Marry her!" This time it was a kind of whisper, an echo of an astounding thought. "By George!" Wardlaw got up and went outside, leaving the Captain squinting at the starry night beyond the slightly swinging door.

The South China Sea has a bag full of tricks. She is a most deceiving lady—beatific calms, typhoons. You may cross her twenty voyages and see nothing more active than a school of porpoise disturb her placid bosom. You may make another twenty and do nothing but dodge or plow through the loosed spirits of ten million whirling dervishes. Green mountains of water, green skies and black horizons, and a booming as muffled bells.

They ran into the outer circle of one of these terrors. All day it blew great guns and little guns. The forward hatch was literally torn away; a boat was stove in, and the rail on the starboard quarter smashed into a junk of twisted piping and splintered teak.

There were few in the dining saloon that night. Miss Allison beckoned to Wardlaw to come over to her table, which he did readily. After dinner she suggested that they go outside.

"Pretty rough weather," he said doubtfully.

"I'm not afraid. I'm a good sailor."

"That isn't it. You might get hurt."

"Come along!"

"All right—to the last ditch."

She put on her heavy deck-coat, tied a veil over her hair, linked her arm in his and led him outside. This camaraderie was to Wardlaw the most delightful experience he had ever known.

The moon was up, but wan. The ship seemed to be plowing through mountains of molten silver and valleys of ink. By pulling themselves along the deck-house rail they succeeded in getting well forward. Suddenly, in a spirit of mischief, she broke away from the rail and tried to stand alone. A dip sent her staggering toward the outer rail. But even as he sprang toward her a rise sent her into his arms.

And—he kissed her!

## CHAPTER X

THIS kiss was squarely on the lips—no clumsy cheek caress. The cave-man! But instantly he knew that he hadn't played the cave-man cynically. He had kissed her because he had to. An abominable act! His conscience was already at war with his senses. He had grossly insulted her. He would never forgive himself. He was stunned with the appalling thought that this would mark the end of things.

She was first to recover from the shock. Quietly she put her palms against his chest and pressed him back, for he hadn't thought to let her go! Then she caught at the hand-rail and drew herself around into the lee of the ladies' salon, into which she vanished.

He turned and staggered toward the beacon of light that streamed out of the smoke room door. He curled himself up in a lounge corner and smoked. It hadn't been premeditated; but this lack did not make it a whit less excusable. She would interpret the act logically as his real attitude toward her, the attitude of a cad. Yet he could not ignore the exultation which still tingled his blood.

He had kissed her, with her hair, sweet-smelling blowing into his face, her heart echoing the thunder of his own. No matter

what happened, he would always have this moment.

He raised his head suddenly. A perfume, subtle, elusive: what had it been? Lemon-verbena! That was it. It was her kitbag that had gotten into his cabin by mistake. Lemon-verbena!

But why had he kissed her? What was behind this inexplicable act? He lowered his pipe, his mouth agap. He loved her!

He went outside again. The smoke room had become insupportably stuffy. He wanted the singing wind in his hair; he wanted to watch the mobile hills and valleys, the rocking moon; he wanted to get close to the elemental. He loved her!

All the baffling puzzles solved. Why, he must have fallen in love with her back there that day at the theatre. "Marry," the Captain had said. And so he would—if she would have him—if she could forgive him! "Play the cave-man," the professor had said. Well, he had played it; and if he hadn't played it, he would never have known that he loved her—before it was too late and she had passed over the horizon. So it had come. He, John Wardlaw, old-stick-in-the-mud, had found him a desirable woman.

It was midnight before he turned in; but he couldn't sleep.

Neither could she. She heard his door slam, and she sat up in her bunk and stared in the direction of that sound. Why she suddenly burst into tears and buried her face in the pillow is a mystery not to be solved.

Wardlaw was up early the next morning. This would be their last day together—or the first of many. He was filled with a great courage. He ate his breakfast hurriedly and went on deck in search of her. He found her at the starboard rail, chatting amiably with Huroki; and Wardlaw's fine resolves went by the board. Nevertheless he approached. She had seen him, and if he ran away now, he was lost.

Huroki did not leave. He greeted Wardlaw with a smile that displayed his sound white teeth. He spoke of the storm, recounted a previous experience, regretted that Japan would be cold until May. Perhaps he observed the gloomy abstraction in Wardlaw's eyes.

"Mr. Wardlaw, America is a great country, and you Americans are supremely clever. Perhaps we shall meet again some day. Good morning." And with a choppy little stride, Huroki walked away.

"What did he mean by that?" asked Wardlaw, puzzled.

"We have just discovered that we belong to the Mutual Admiration Society. I have found out from him that he really admires our Yankee ingenuity, and he has learned from me that Americans have a wholesome respect for the Japanese. Good morning!" She opened a hand, and a thousand little pieces of paper fluttered on the wind.

"You are not going?"

"I am simply greeting you. Hadn't the opportunity before."

He mumbled something unintelligible.

"Hong Kong to-morrow," she said, "and winter. I feel a touch of it in the air." She drew her collar closer about her throat.

Wardlaw had expected reproaches. He stared at her dumbly.

"What a wonderful journey it has been!" she exclaimed, turning her eyes away. The utter bewilderment on the man's face! Another man would have instantly recognized her attitude, her willingness to overlook a misstep. Apology was written so plainly in his face that she did not require any verbal expression. "Have you packed?"

"Packed?"

"Yes. I'm going to pack this morning. I hate bundling things into my trunks the last moment. Come and see me at tea-time." She waved her hand airily, and was gone.

Sulkily he went into the ship's library. He tried a dozen novels, and none of them held him after the first page or two. Anyhow, her manner suggested that she was willing to overlook the affront, provided, of course, that he never repeated it or spoke of it.

Later he made two or three desperate sallies, but she had company, more than he had ever seen about her before. He kept his promise to join her at tea. But all the chairs were filled, and he had to stand, first on one leg and then on the other, like a pelican or an adjutant bird. Finally he set his cup on deck, excused himself and marched off in a huff which was visible to everybody.

But he did find her alone after dinner—on



the boat deck, in the same little projection where he had received that crock on the head.

"I don't suppose you'll ever forgive me," he said abruptly, by way of greeting.

"For what?"

He saw the trap; but he stepped boldly into it. "I sha'n't apologize."

"Well?"

"I'm not sorry in the least."

"Why should you be? The wildness of the storm, the singing of the wind, the mountains rising and falling everywhere. Perhaps we were both a little mad. So a kiss, under such circumstances, is harmless."

"No,"—doggedly—"it wasn't harmless. Will you marry me?"

She gave a little gasp. Then she demanded: "Are you offering me marriage because your conscience troubles you?"

"No. Because I love you."

She had nothing to say for a moment. "So you wish to marry me?"

"Yes."

"Knowing nothing about me whatever?"

"I know all I want to know—that you're the only woman I ever wanted."

"Captain Wardlaw, that is finely said. I appreciate the honor you do me."

"Yes—or no?"

"Neither one nor the other. I shall be in Hong Kong for several days. If, when we meet again, you are willing to repeat what you have just told me, I promise you an answer." And with this perplexing statement she turned and walked swiftly away, and was

gone before he realized that she had not given him any address.

The ship dropped anchor in the bay of Hong Kong at dawn; but Wardlaw did not turn out until seven. He had all the time in the world now. He had won out.

As he stepped out of his cabin, he saw the door of hers wide open—and the cabin empty.

“Where is Miss Allison?” he asked of the steward.

“She went ashore about dawn, sir. A private launch came out for her.”

This struck Wardlaw as rather odd. “Did she leave any note for me?”

“No, sir—that is, not with me.”

Wardlaw proceeded to the upper deck. Gone, and without a word! He became filled with a sense of foreboding. His cogitations were brought to a close by a vigorous thwack on the shoulders. He whirled about.

“O’Holleran!” he cried.

“Red hair and all! Gee, boss, but it’s good to see you. Come on! Chedsoye is below in the Company launch. Don’t bother about breakfast. We’ll have that at the club. All aboard!”

“Where’s the old boy?”

“Having his bacon and eggs on the Peak. Hustle!”

“Give me a quarter of an hour.”

“But hustle! Where’s your stuff?”

Wardlaw gave his brisk lieutenant directions and hurried off to the purser’s office. After all, why should he let a woman bother him? He was back in the game again, and

that was all that really mattered. Carrington, Huroki & Company had gone into bankruptcy. Ainslee would probably dance the can-can when he was told what was in the portfolio.

"Well, the voyage is over," Wardlaw said cheerfully to the purser. "I'll take that little portfolio of mine, if you please. The Captain has the receipt in his safe."

"All right, Mr. Wardlaw." The purser stooped before his safe, laid the portfolio on the counter and opened his signature-book.

Wardlaw signed it and opened the portfolio. He drew forth a print and spread it out. Frantically he pulled out another and another. But none of these concerned the Oriental Construction Company. Wardlaw sat down weakly.

"What's the matter, Mr. Wardlaw?" asked the purser anxiously.

"The matter is, I've been robbed in a most singular fashion."

"Robbed?"

"Yes. But don't worry. No fault of yours. These are the things I deposited with you, but they are not what I believed I was depositing."

"I say, Mr. Wardlaw, but I thought it bally odd at the time."

"What was?"—dully.

"Why, Miss Allison deposited a portfolio exactly like yours, and she claimed it a little after five this morning."

## CHAPTER XI

WARDLAW was quite calm now, outwardly. He refolded the worthless prints and restored them to the portfolio, so like his own that only the closest scrutiny might note the difference. He could only appreciate the diabolical cleverness of this amazing substitution. The little incidents that led up to the theft would return to him later, in their chronological order. But just now there was only one thought: he had been betrayed by the woman he loved.

"A bad blow, sir?" asked the purser; for Wardlaw's face looked strangely gray and old.

"I'm afraid it is. There's no repairing it."

"Well, I thought I knew something about women!"

"What do you mean by that?"—in a detached kind of way.

"Why, she looked straight. Politics?"

"World-politics."

"Ah, that's different. Very clever women get into that game, and they're not all as black as they're painted."

"No doubt." Lemon-verbena, and the mad wind blowing her hair into his face.

"Anything I can do?"

"Nothing. By the way, has that Jap Hur-oki left the ship?"

"He went ashore with Miss Allison."

"Thanks!" Nerves began to awake, now here, now there. Muscular knots formed at the base of Wardlaw's jaw, and his eyes became as hard as Arctic ice. "You will say nothing of this."

"Trust me, Mr. Wardlaw."

"Good morning."

The first clear idea was to seek the Captain. The old sailor might be able to offer some side-lights. But the Captain was nonplussed at the news.

"You can't be talking of our Miss Allison?"

"No one else."

"There's a mistake somewhere."

"It was on my part," replied Wardlaw grimly.

"Then why did she save your life?"

"Save my life?"

"That she did! If she hadn't called out, interposed her arm, we'd have had to ship you home from Colombo. My Cingalese servant saw the whole affair, for I set him guard over you. The wonder is that her arm wasn't broken."

"Her arm?" Wardlaw now recalled her gasp of pain when he caught her by the arm that morning after the assault. "I don't know what to think or what to do," he said despairingly. "The purser declares on his oath she deposited a portfolio like mine: and it was mine. She might be a tender nurse and a thief at the same time. Not an ordinary thief, Captain. A big international business intrigue, and I've proved that I'm the most worth-

less pawn on the board. It's hard. I've worked so faithfully and loyally over the deal. I did everything I possibly could, but they were too clever. Captain, I'm done for, broken for good. The biggest thing in my career gone to pot. The finest old man in the world depending upon me and I've failed him. I took every precaution a human being could. But they beat me."

"But Miss Allison! What are you going to do?"

"Walk into my office and hand in my resignation. Oh, I'll always find work; but I'll never again be trusted with big things. I'm done for. It isn't the money. I've plenty. But the biggest thing in the world has slipped through my fingers—the two biggest things," he added in afterthought. "Good-by, Captain."

They shook hands; the sailor's gaze followed Wardlaw until the latter's head disappeared below the deck. Intermittently, for some time after, the Captain wagged his head.

"Look alive, boss," called O'Holleran from the launch. "We've got your duds. No trunks?"

"Nothing but the kitbags." Wardlaw went down the ladder and took his seat in the launch. "How's the old boy?"

"Chipper. He won't be able to see you until to-night. He left word for you to go up the Peak and dine with him."

"Did the bankers arrive?"

"Three hundred million dollars' of 'em!

Open her up, boy!" O'Holleran called to the Chinese mechanic.

"Hello, Ched! Got rid of that ague, I see."

"Well, I don't shake as much as I did. Have a pleasant trip, boss?"

"Fine!"

There was no use dragging these fine fellows in; he alone was culpable; so he decided to say nothing to them. Idly he watched the flag maneuvers of the gray battleships over Kowloon way. Everything was ready, and the secret in the hands of the Japanese Government! The confidence he had had in the mere sight of that portfolio! Poor fool, why hadn't he opened it then, while the odd substitution of the kitbags was still fresh in his mind?

He reached into his vest pocket for a match. With the match he fetched two bits of paper. "*Car—China.*" Carrington! Not being sure of the Japs, he had sent along the woman. How easy it was to translate the meaning of her friendliness!

Still, why should he blame her? If she had betrayed him, it was during an hour when they were totally unknown to each other, except by sight. The galling idea was that perhaps she had been smiling in her sleeve all the while. The woman he loved, and would go on loving until the end of his days.

In the pay of Carrington—that is to say, a secret agent for the General Construction Company. He had read of beautiful women doing this sort of work, but he had always at-

tributed it to the imaginative flights of novelists. No doubt she had turned over the prints and estimates to Huroki—for a fat price. Anyhow, they had left the ship together. Never again would he scent the perfume of lemon-verbena without distaste.

A woman-hater! It now appeared on the face of the waters that he was due to become one in all earnest.

"What's the matter, boss?" asked O'Holleran.

"Why?"

"You look a bit peaked."

"Breakfast will jack me up."

"How'd you leave that little ol' New York?"

"Too suddenly to please me. But how's the old boy's health?"

"You can never tell by his looks. But I guess the trip did him a lot of good. Never saw such a busy rooster. He's been up to Peking and back four times. And I'll wager there isn't a doorknob in the palace he hasn't rattled. All ready for you, boss."

All ready for him! Wardlaw swallowed with difficulty and stared at the hotel on the Peak. In a few hours he would be up there, telling of his supreme failure. He mapped out exactly what he should do: a frank confession that the little yellow men had beaten him. On no account would he mention the woman.

He struck that day from his calendar. He never could recollect what he did from the hour of landing until seven o'clock that night,



when he entered the lobby of the hotel where Ainslee put up whenever he was in Hong Kong. The Chinese servant who led Wardlaw up to Ainslee's suite remarked that Mr. Ainslee was sending off some cables and would be with him presently.

In the centre of the living room was a table set with shining silver and spotless linen. The fatted calf for the prodigal. Wardlaw shrugged and walked at once to one of the windows and stood there staring down at the sparkling harbor.

Where was she? Of what was she thinking at this moment? Would he ever see her again? A kiss and a whiff of lemon-verbena! How well he knew John Wardlaw! Had she appeared before him at this moment, he would have fallen at her feet, forgiven her everything, followed her, married her.

He heard the door open and close, and he turned. His heart did not seem to have as much room as usual.

"Hello, son!" hailed Henry Ainslee, coming forward with outstretched hands, his tanned and ruddy face expanded in the friendliest smile imaginable.

Wardlaw pressed the hands powerfully, stirred as he was by the thought of all this man had done for him.

"Mr. Ainslee, perhaps I've no right to shake your hands. I've failed."

"Failed? Here, sit down on the lounge. Have a cigar? No? What do you mean by failed?"

"Your warning, which I received in Cairo,

was obeyed. I took every precaution. But I'm only a civil engineer; I'm not clever enough for this sort of game. The little yellow men got the best of me. By this time the Japanese Government knows everything."

"Tell me exactly what happened. I put the game in your hands, son. Give me all the facts."

Briefly Wardlaw recounted his adventure—with one exception.

"Lord, Lord! Why didn't you let me know what you had done? Why didn't you cable me that you had drawn up rough estimates and specifications? What a mistake! Why didn't O'Holleran tip me?"

"I had made him promise; I had made them all promise. I was so afraid that something would get out."

"But to me!"

"I wanted to surprise you."

"I guess you've done it."

"I had no inkling of what was going on in New York. Perhaps you should have been a little more explicit. But you were ill, they said, and I made allowances. And yet ordinarily I should have pulled through all right. I was betrayed in a most remarkable manner."

"Betrayed?" Ainslee twisted his unlighted cigar from one corner of his mouth to the other.

"Some one beside yourself knew about that portfolio. Even had one of my kitbags imitated so cleverly that it completely fooled me. The substitution was made before we left

Port Said; and from there to Hong Kong I lived in blissful ignorance. I made so many mistakes! Could they have approached your private secretary?"

"As easily as they could O'Holleran or yourself. No; the leak couldn't have been there. Too bad, too bad! Well, we'll take our medicine. You're the best boy I've ever known. Nobody's infallible."

"Carrington was back of it. Not having a true angle of the game that was being played in New York, he laid a trap for me and I walked straight into it. He asked me how long it would take to build the road, and like a fool I said five years. Carrington's an engineer, and a good one. He knew what that meant, and laid his mines accordingly. Five years! I might just as well have told him that we had drawn up specifications and estimates as we went along. And I gave it away."

"So I was informed."

"I'll resign."

"Better hang on a little while longer." Ainslee's chin sank into his collar. "The old plate! Well, it's all in the game. Your loyalty, son, is worth something to me personally. I acquit you of any blame. It's the way the cards fell. You happen to be an honest man, and when you fight a crook, you have to use crooked methods."

"Mr. Ainslee, I admire you more than any man I know. I am grateful for all you have done for me; but I rather believe that this is the end of my usefulness."

"Anything else to confess?"

"Nothing."

Ainslee took from his pocket a folded slip of paper. He carefully spread it out on a knee.

"*How old was Cupid?* How did that strike you, son?"

"Until I looked into the code addendum, I thought it was some joke."

"Clarke thought it was a joke when I asked him." Ainslee chuckled. "Didn't he tell you I was showing signs of senile decay? Son, instinctively I knew that the moment I left New York, they'd let out something to the Japs. A mere hint would be sufficient; for the Japanese Government isn't in love with Captain John Wardlaw, late of the Engineers.

Ainslee got up and began to walk about, waving the paper to emphasize his remarks. He was a big man, robust and a trifle florid. He looked healthy, but his heart was in sore straits. Each time he took a sharp breath came a blinding stab; and sooner or later, that stab would go a little too deep, and then—good-by! So he put his house in order, as you will see.

Occasionally he sent an oblique glance at the depressed countenance of his trusted lieutenant. A three-cornered fight, with one foot ostensibly in the grave! The plate, this boy here and—he stopped before Wardlaw and smiled down at him.

"Son, I was ill; but just now I feel I'm going to get well. Doubtless you believe I ought to have been more explicit in my first

cable to you. I knew exactly what I was doing. They haven't dubbed me Old Details for nothing. I was in pretty bad shape when I left New York, but not so bad that I couldn't outthink and outwit a precious pair like Clarke and Carrington. I let them believe I had both feet in the grave. That was my trap. They did not fall into it; they jumped in. For weeks I've had a private detective trailing that pair. Here, read this cable which I just sent Clarke."

The change of tone was enough to send Wardlaw's thoughts whirling. Since dawn he had been knocked about, mentally. What kind of a blow was coming now? Ainslee's tone was ironical, but it was buoyant. Wardlaw read: "*Never kick a dog because he looks dead; he may be only sleeping.*" He turned a bewildered countenance upon his benefactor. "Is that in the code?"

"Son, it's the purest and simplest English I could think of."

Suddenly Ainslee seized his lieutenant by the shoulders and shook him boisterously.

"How old was Cupid? He was any old age—mine, if you like. Come, wake up; no need to look at me like that. Never was sounder in the head than at this moment."

"But——"

"But me no buts! You were never going to peep, were you? You were going to turn that page down like a sportsman and say nothing to anyone. Big enough to take your medicine without blinking!

"I am getting along; my day is over. When

this road is finished, you'll come to New York and wobble around in my official shoes. This is my last fight. From now on I'm going to play. I've made you my heir, to carry the plate on. And you'll carry it. You've been the victim of circumstances—circumstances more or less cooked up. Clarke and Carrington will jump to the General Construction after next election. You'll make a good ambassador—with a good coach at your elbow."

Clarke was right: the old boy was as mad as a hatter. Heir? When the road was finished? Ambassador? What a pity, what a pity! And O'Holleran had said never a word.

"All right, Mr. Ainslee; anything you say," he said in a mildly conciliatory tone.

Ainslee exploded. "By the Lord Harry, the boy really believes I'm daffy! Listen to Old Details, son. You've worked under my banner for fifteen solid years. I look upon you with the same faith I look upon my watch, which is a good one. If you said a deal could be done in such and such a time, you were always correct. You said it would take a year to go from the Tsaidam Swamps to Shanghai. You always made allowances for obstacles in your computations. You were gone on this trip fourteen months. Knowing you, these two extra months set me thinking. You were always doing the unexpected. So when you started for New York, I wired O'Holleran for facts. I gave him my reasons for wanting them, and he let your cat out of the bag. Perhaps I didn't crowd

on steam after that glorious news! I kept the wireless going until the batteries gave out. But I had a great idea in regard to you, son; so I couldn't take you into my confidence. I had to warn you, but I could do no more than that. *How old was Cupid?* I had to leave you to your own devices. Well, between Port Said and Colombo I received a wireless giving me that estimate of yours."

"What?" Wardlaw's gloomy eyes became filled with fire.

"Yes, sir. A week ago Norton and his banker friends put their lordly fists under mine, and three days ago the Chinese Government——"

"You've pulled it through?" Wardlaw began to feel a bit light-headed.

"On your rough estimate and the word of Henry Ainslee."

"But how did you get that estimate?" demanded Wardlaw, thrilling.

"By wireless."

"No, no! Who sent it?"

"I'll spin a yarn."

"I don't want to hear any yarn. I want to know who sent that estimate."

"I'm going to tell this yarn; and if you interrupt me, I'll fire you!"

"Very well," agreed Wardlaw. He was half convinced that he was in the middle of some fantastic dream. Ainslee's heir? The deal gone through? Carrington beaten? He clasped his hands and bore down until the knuckles cracked. He wanted to feel a hurt to assure himself that he was really awake.

Ainslee cleared his voice. "I'm a lonely old codger. Wife and boy died thirty years ago. I'm as lonely in my way as you are in yours, Jack."

Jack! How good that sounded, coming from the lips of the old boy.

"I've had my eye on you for years. Maybe you weren't aware of it, but I've been keeping the closest kind of tabs on you. If I had a son, I'd want him built like you, mentally and physically. You used to puzzle me. You were such a shy, incurious duffer. Never bothered about New York; never fished for information; took care of your end and let it go at that. So finally I came to the conclusion that it was your work. You loved the job as another man might have loved a woman. You always picked out something nobody thought could be done—and you got away with it. I used to laugh. If a woman turned the corner, you ran like a white-head; if it was a tiger, Lordy, what a scrap!

"On the other hand, I began to grow afraid that the wrong woman might land you in the end. To paraphrase an old saying of my friend Fitzsimmons, the bashfuller they are, the harder they fall. More of that later. You had the supreme faculty of making your subordinates love you. You can get more through a man's heart than through his brain. You think I won this fight. No. You won it because you had an idea. I only made use of it." Ainslee's hands went down and closed over Wardlaw's smarting fingers. He raised the young man to his feet. "Son you thought



this was a business stunt. On the contrary, it was, if you dig down deep enough, only an old man in search of a son. Will you be mine?"

"Why, God bless you, Mr. Ainslee, for that!" Wardlaw choked. "I don't want to be your heir; but if you'll put your hand on my shoulder once in a while and call me Jack, I'll be satisfied."

"The whole shooting-match goes along with me. I'm a romantic old coot, if you want to know. The drawer under my bunk on the yacht is filled with soft-soapy yarns; but I like 'em. One day I wrote a story in my head. It appealed to me so strongly that I had to dramatize it. *How old was Cupid?* Don't interrupt me. I had an idea in regard to you. I had another in regard to someone else. And neither of you realized that I was dramatizing you. I tested you in every possible way, and always you emerged—clean. Well, things turned out as I planned. You were betrayed, but you were going down into oblivion without a whimper. I like that. Son, I betrayed you. Scarcely a day went by that I did not get a wireless."

"Will you tell me who sent you that estimate?"

"A woman. And there she is now!"

There came a metallic rattle of curtain rings, and Wardlaw's glance shot in the direction of the sound. In the doorway, between the portières which led to the adjoining room, stood a woman in black, her face and arms and shoulders as luminously pale as moonshine.

## CHAPTER XII

THERE are moments—flashes of happiness—which we always cherish, even to the smallest details. We store them away in the back of our heads, and only half-lights and singleness bring them forth again. Such a moment was this tableau to Wardlaw. So long as he lived he would see her there, framed in the portières, the incline of her body like that of the winged victory in the Louvre.

“Hello, Junior!” cried Ainslee.

“Hello, Uncle Henry!”

She let the portières fall behind her and came toward the two men without embarrassment.

“Jack, this is Cameron Junior, my ward,” said Ainslee, “daughter of my old partner, Dick Cameron.”

Typhoons and kitbags and lemon-verbena! Wardlaw was incapable of stirring so much as a finger. Perhaps she misinterpreted his attitude, for the smile faded, and another woman would have noted anxiety in her eyes.

“I am pleased to meet Captain Wardlaw—again,” she said, slowly extending her hand. “Uncle, I believe he doesn’t intend to shake hands with me! Isn’t he going to forgive me?”

“I’ll leave that for you two to find out,”

said Ainslee. "I'll be back in twenty minutes—and Samson pulled down the Temple in two."

Ainslee went out and closed the door behind him. He did not stop, but continued on down to the main dining room. He was hungry. Having an anticipatory mind, he knew that he must eat his dinner now or never.

The first movement Wardlaw made, after the door closed, was to draw his hands across his bewildered eyes.

"I'm really and truly," she said with a provocative smile. But she did not renew the offer of her hand—an ominous sign, had he but known.

"Cameron. I never knew he had a daughter." Instantly he knew that he had said something of incomparable brilliancy, something to be placed in the category of Balaam's historical address.

"No doubt. I've been Uncle Henry's ward since I was fifteen—nine years, in fact."

"You don't need a guardian."

"Ah, that's better. We'll manage this interview after all. Sorry you won't shake hands." She floated past him to the window. "China—and over there, the road!"

The road! That stirred Wardlaw's mental machinery, even if ponderously. The road! It meant something to her also. The sweep of her glorious shoulders and the poise of her magnificent head! The road! It was like a bell to a sleeper: Wardlaw was beginning to wake up.

"My mother's name was Allison. I took

that. All my life I wanted to get into the game—feel the stir of big adventure where men risk their lives for an idea. It was in my blood. But I was a woman. My heart was big enough, but my petticoats were in the way. I've been after Uncle Henry for years, but he has always put me off with excuses. I wanted to be of some use in the world; I wanted to do things. I was like a feather in the wind; I drifted or flew, but never with any objective. Think of his having time to dramatize us, and still achieve a great end! Think of the heart of a man who, desperately pressed in a stupendous business intrigue, could find the time to try to make two people happy! We started out bravely, you and I, upon a great adventure—in the end to learn that we were puppets on a wire. Think of his finding time to dramatize us! How well he knew us both! We thought it was really and truly, anyhow. A souvenir for my old age. You amused me. You were as shy as a trout I once knew. If I hadn't been accidentally locked in your cabin that day, I doubt we'd ever become acquainted."

To Wardlaw the room seemed to have grown unaccountably chill.

"My mother died shortly after my birth. This, along with the fact that I was a girl, nearly broke my father's heart. He had so wanted a boy! When I was five he began to make a boy of me. He took me along with him into the wildernesses. I lived in tents and shacks. I grew up hard and sound and a little wild. But he did not neglect my edu-

cation. He was not only a great engineer; he was also a brilliant scholar. He was so vital physically that the world never considered him anything but a human dynamo. When he died, I knew a great deal about nature and some facts about men.

"I was fifteen then. Naturally I fell under Uncle Henry's care. He saw to it that I should receive the advantages due to my sex. But the spirit of adventure was so strong in me that education and city life never succeeded in repressing it. After I was eighteen I began to travel. I went everywhere, out of the beaten tracks. I rode, hunted, swam, climbed; I made a pilgrimage to all the great engineering feats of the O. C. C. And I heard of you."

It was the way she said that that made the room a little warmer.

"I heard of you; but somehow I was never able to catch up with you. Your exploits fascinated me, and I made a hero out of you, as young girls will sometimes. How I longed to get into the game—something big, vital, exciting! I hate scissors, needles, spools. But I can cook. I had to. Out in the open I had to cook for Father—dear old Daddy! Uncle Henry found me a fine little rebel. But he had been dealing all his life with rebels. He has made a fine art of persuasion. I soon discovered that I liked being tamed—by a proper man. But for a long time I was hobbledehoy.

"Imagine my joy when Uncle Henry called me up one night and told me what he wanted

me to do! I felt like a crusader before the walls of Jerusalem. I was going to add my mite to the splendid monument my father had left behind. I now realize why Uncle Henry is a tower in the business world. He anticipates everything, leaves nothing to chance. He did not know that you had drawn up specifications and estimates; he only prepared against that possibility. He did not know that Carrington would betray us to the Japanese; he only armed himself against the possibility. You had given him duplicate keys to your kitbags; his portfolio and yours were exactly alike; he even got me the label I put on your kitbags.

"All this a month before you came to New York. But you—and O'Holleran and Chedsoye and Jones! It was magnificent. Just you four, to accomplish what you did! Imagine the fervor, the zeal, with which I entered the game—to learn this afternoon that I was acting in a play especially written for me! And all the time I believed that the future of O. C. C. depended solely upon my woman's cleverness. While his idea was merely to throw us together, in stress and danger. There was danger, real danger; and for that part I thank him."

Her voice was like a harp, lightly touched; but there was an undertone which filled him with vague prescience that the future wasn't so clear as might be. He determined not to speak until she was done. Puppets!

"He was always worrying over me, like a hen over a duckling. The streak of wildness

and impulsiveness is still strong in me; and he knows it. He was always in fear that I might marry the wrong man. But of that, more anon. He told me about the secret bottoms in your kitbags. My part was to get your portfolio—before the Japs. All the way across the Atlantic, from Naples to Brindisi, from Constantinople to Alexandria, I studied your kitbags—the one you always carried. I was reasonably assured that if you had any valuables, they would be in that kitbag. Label by label I imitated it. It was extremely difficult, but it was also exciting. Oh, I was clever enough. Even if I was only acting a part, I had to interpolate lines, as they say. And I never enjoyed anything half so much. When the steward set down your kitbags before your cabin door, I personally made the substitution. It took but a minute to change the portfolios. And then I waited—in terror. Supposing you looked into the portfolio, which nine men out of ten would have done? Supposing you discovered the trick at once?”

“I was thinking of you,” he said quietly. “That’s the reason.”

A pause. What was she looking at—the harbor lights? As a matter of fact, she was closely watching his slightest move—his reflection in the window-glass.

“Yesterday morning when you came upon Huroki and me, I had just finished telling him that the Chinese Government had signed the concession. The first night I saw you playing bridge with him, I wired Uncle

Henry his description; and your friend O'Holleran supplied the information that he was a secret agent. He thought you knew, and that we were in secret partnership. I offered him transportation ashore this morning, just to confuse you. Well, I played a part in a man's game, even if Uncle Henry wrote the part for me out of the kindness of his heart. The O. C. C. will go on, and my father's name will go on with it. So many times I wanted to tell you everything—after I had sent the estimates. But the desire in me was strong to see how you would act in the end—when you learned that I had betrayed you. You never told him. That pleased me quite as much as it pleased him. He was always talking about you, always praising you. And now—we must spoil his dream!"

The final phrase went by; he missed its import. He was thinking that here was Scheherazade in the flesh. He saw her nestled among her blue Cashmir pillows. The veil fluttered slightly as she talked. Through the marble lattice, so tenderly and beautifully carved, he could in fancy see the dazzling dusty landscape of India. Just beyond the lattice, on the broad ledge, gay green little parrakeets quarreled and made love, and where the minaret cast its shadow over the black and white marble squares of the court below, slate-colored doves with coral feet waltzed and cooed. Scheherazade!

"What a curious old world it is!" she went on. "How bravely we go forth with what we think to be our own idea, when it is something



long ago mapped out for us! I wonder if you will recall it—a noisy crowd of students on Broadway at night, subdued in a singular fashion? From an imaginative character, you became substance that night, Captain Wardlaw. The man I was with held me back at the edge of things. I liked that man. I was only eighteen. He was handsome, brave, resourceful. I even thought I loved him. But when he refused to go to the aid of my coachman—not from cowardice but from selfishness—the dream dissolved. We saw a man force his way to the curb. We heard him speak quietly and sensibly. His absolute ease and common-sense averted a serious riot.

“My escort uttered a name. It was yours. I broke away and ran after you. It seemed to me as if all New York was on Broadway that night, without objective. I could not reach you in time to thank you. You suddenly dropped out of the crowd and entered a candy-shop. I watched you for a moment. You sat down before the soda-water counter and ordered a chocolate soda. That is why I laughed the other morning. A few minutes later I told my escort I would not marry him. Thanks, Captain! But for you I probably would have been Craig Carrington’s wife this day—a very unhappy woman. No doubt you have often, in a puzzled way, felt the weight of his enmity; for I am sure he always blamed you for my decision. You had played the man where he might have played it. Poor Uncle Henry! His play isn’t going to end the way he wrote it. I am still a rebel. I

would not marry you, Captain Wardlaw, if you were the last man in the world!" She turned and faced him.

"Where are your wraps?" he demanded.

"My wraps?"—thunderstruck.

"Where are they?"

"In the other room. What has happened?"

Wardlaw dashed into the adjoining room and returned with the same furious haste.

"Here!" He held up the cloak.

She slipped her arms into the sleeves, hypnotized by the suddenness of his words and actions.

"Put your hat on! Hurry! We haven't a moment!"

She obeyed mechanically, star-eyed. He put on his own hat and coat. He caught her rather roughly by the arm and drew her to a window.

"See that battleship's searchlight?"

"Yes!"

"Kowloon. We'll take a sampan."

"A sampan?"

"And no time to lose, either! Ah Fee is near the Hong Kong Hotel. That won't take a minute. On the way to the Praya. Come!"

He drew her to the door and out into the hall. She was so bewildered and mystified that she offered no resistance, verbal or physical. They reached the cable-house shortly, and Wardlaw summoned the man in charge.

"Town. A sovereign when you get to the lower end. Stop for nobody. Get in, Miss Cameron."

"Captain Wardlaw!"

"It's life and death, Scheherazade!" Wardlaw literally propelled her into the car, keeping hold of her arm when he sat down beside her. "Start her, man, start her!"

The car gave a little jerk and began to glide down toward the many flickering lights of Hong Kong. Still with her arm imprisoned, Wardlaw helped her to alight from the car at the lower station. Then he raced down the street with her, hailing the first empty carriage.

"Ah Fee's, near the Hong Kong Hotel. Fast!"

The Manchurian pony scuttled away for dear life.

"I shall be here but a moment," said Wardlaw, as the carriage, with a lurch and a screech, drew up before the goldsmith's shop. He dashed into the shop at top speed; two minutes later he dashed out and jumped into the carriage. "Praya—sampan!"

Away they went. When they reached the water-front, Wardlaw dismissed the carriage, grasped the dazed young woman by the arm again and bored her through the moving streams of sailormen and Chinese. Presently she heard strange sounds, a bubbling and a gurgling. It was Wardlaw and the sampanman arguing in Chinese.

"All aboard!" cried Wardlaw. He led the girl to the middle seat, and they sat down. The Chinaman bore down upon the sweep.

"Captain Wardlaw, will you be so kind as to tell me what all this is about?" There was

a space—a breathing space—between each word, for she was all but breathless.

He knew that in his next move he would risk everything; but he did not hesitate. He put his arm around her and kissed her, kissed her eyes, her lips, her hair. What did he care for the Chinaman at the sweep? He released her.

“We are going to Kowloon. There lives a friend of mine. Back home we'd call him a sky-pilot. Around here they call him a splicer. I have four rings in my pocket. One of them is bound to fit. We are going to be married, Scheherazade. We are not going to break Uncle Henry's heart, but we're going to let him eat his bally dinner alone!”

After that, silence, except for the seethe of the water over the sweep and the lap-lap against the sides of the sampan.

Romance! She had resented the cut-and-dried affair so cleverly conceived by Ainslee. She wanted her own love-story; she refused one ready-made. When she told him she would not marry him, the revelation came in a flash that if he left her then, it would be forever. And upon the heels of this revelation came the idea. The cave-man! It had the same ironical effect on his mind as a dash of cold water in the face of a man in a blistering desert. In that moment he understood; it was as if some rare occultism had given him the ability to see into her soul.

Silence! It grew oppressive. Had he won her or lost her? As the lights of the Praya receded, his heart began to drop. Then,

when he had about given up hope, something touched his sleeve, hesitantly. This something moved downward slowly, and presently it became a hand, warm and firm, and touching his, rested there. And then, a ripple of happy laughter!

"Heavens, I thought something dreadful had happened to Uncle Henry or that O. C. C.! Oh, man, what made you think of it? For if you hadn't, I'd never have forgiven you. I'd have married you in the end, for I've loved you I don't know how long. But always this would have been lacking. Let me have the rings."

The rings were all a little too large, but that did not matter.

THE END



## HAROLD MACGRATH

**H**AROLD MACGRATH was born in Syracuse, September 4, 1871. He did not attain any great heights of fame as a school boy, but after being graduated from high school, he aspired to be a literary man. Accordingly, he started the publication of a local weekly, christened the *Breeze*, which he financed with \$500 of his father's money. This was short-lived, however. He then tried his hand at poetry, but all his efforts were promptly returned from the publishers.

As his writings did not seem to increase his fame, Mr. MacGrath turned his attention to journalism. Obtaining a position on the *Syracuse Post Standard*, he went to work for six months, at nothing a week. Then, led by a desire for larger fields and a salary, he resigned and journeyed to Chicago, where he succeeded in securing a job with the *Chicago Evening Mail*. He left the *Mail* before it ceased publication and began free lancing in New York. This failed to bring an income, so he decided to visit relatives in Albany. With only a dollar to his name after a pool game on Broadway, he bought a steerage ticket and left on the night boat for Albany.

When he arrived there, he got a position on the *Albany Times Union* at a salary, but not a very lucrative one, and after a time he went back to Syracuse where he was on the staff of various newspapers.

Mr. MacGrath broke into magazines with an interview with William Dean Howells and

## HAROLD MACGRATH

then suddenly, in 1899, he wrote a novel, "Arms and the Woman." It was accepted by Ray Stannard Baker, at that time editor of McClure's Syndicate, and appeared serially in the *New York Sun* and other papers. Since then, MacGrath has written such successful books as "The Man on the Box," "The Lure of the Mask," "The Goose Girl," "The Carpet from Bagdad," "The Drums of Jeopardy," "The Pagan Madonna," "The Ragged Edge."

Mr. MacGrath has been an inveterate globe trotter, but for the last few years has lived quietly in Syracuse, with his wife, his brother, and his dogs, writing novels and working in his garden.





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